

disques

JULY
1931

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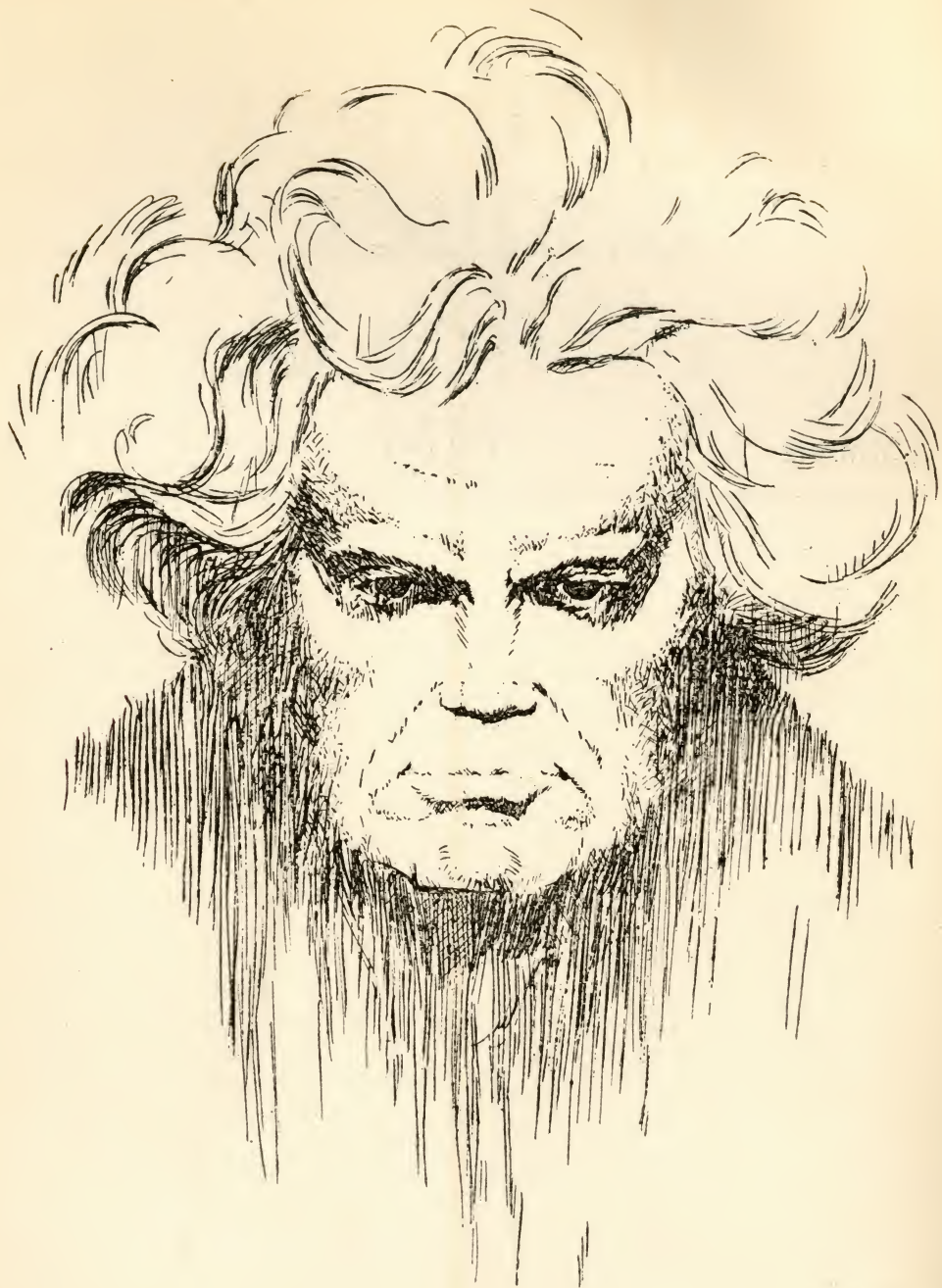
FOR JULY

1931

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VOL. II

JULY, 1931

No. 5

IT seems to be commonly agreed among dealers, manufacturers and collectors that something is wrong with the record business. It is a more or less open secret that, if the phonograph is to stand sturdily on its own legs and occupy a position of any real salience and importance in the musical life of the world, something will necessarily have to be done to inject fresh life and vitality into the industry. Various suggestions, of course, have been offered, all of them eloquently guaranteed by their sponsors to work smoothly and effectively and, indeed, so to increase business as to make everyone interested in records eternally happy and prosperous. For example, it has been argued that merely lowering the price of records would immediately start things humming profitably and that even those now opposed to recorded music would shortly be converted. Again, it has been suggested that if more wisdom and taste were exercised in selecting works to be recorded, business would increase by tremendous leaps and bounds and all the trials and tribulations that currently harass the industry would be forever banished.



These suggestions, one can readily concede, would undoubtedly have certain salubrious effects if adopted;

but it is hardly likely that the advantages thus gained would be of sufficient worth to overcome, or, in fact, even partly to overcome, the present depression. What is obviously needed, it seems to us, is something infinitely more drastic, revolutionary, and startling: some new discovery, for instance, as striking, as significant, as novel, as musically valuable and as far-reaching in its consequences as electrical recording itself. Everyone recalls the excitement electrical recording aroused when it first astonished the world some five or six years ago. Everyone remembers listening open-mouthed to Stokowski's *Danse Macabre*, *Marche Slav*, *Rienzi Overture* and *Blue Danube Waltz*, and to Coates' still gratifying Wagnerian discs. These records almost overnight changed the whole status of recorded music. The phonograph, nearly ready to sink feebly into oblivion, suddenly leaped into prominence, and dealers and manufacturers, rapidly throwing aside their lugubrious expressions, found themselves in a very much alive and fast-moving business.



While modern records are by no means perfect, most of them are at least musically satisfying, and many are genuinely astonishing. Eminent authorities have testified to that. No

one at all familiar with recorded music can reasonably deny that a thoroughly plausible, highly realistic and accurate reproduction of almost any type of musical performance can now be obtained by means of a modern electrical instrument and modern electrical records. Good enough to provide often superlative musical entertainment, there is thus little objection to be found with the actual recording. Nor can one seriously cavil with the general run of works recorded. There is, of course, a vast amount of unnecessary duplication, and similarly a good deal of music that belongs more properly on the garbage heap somehow manages to find its way onto discs. But there is also a tremendous amount of genuinely fine music, creditably performed and recorded, now available. Some of your favorite works may possibly have eluded so far the recorders' eyes, but it is pretty certain that a good many of them are obtainable.



Eminently satisfactory, then, from the point of view of reproduction and the quality of the music available to be reproduced, records yet are still marred by a serious flaw. They do not play long enough. No phonograph record plays longer than five minutes, and the vast majority commonly hover between three and four. This isn't very long; indeed, it is extremely short, and it is only because we have been so long accustomed to hearing recorded music in three- or four-minute snatches that we tolerate the situation with such incredible patience. It is scarcely necessary to point out, at this late date, just how irritating it is to be compelled to leap up every few minutes in order to change record sides. (Automatic machines, useful for some purposes, hardly solve the problem satisfactorily for the serious music lover.) But it is not only profoundly annoying and, indeed, intolerable to those of us with somewhat more than the ordinary amount of laziness in our make-ups; it is also directly responsible for the loss of a great deal of the musical value of the record. This question is briefly discussed by a subscriber in the Correspondence Column this month, and so it is scarcely necessary to dwell at length on the many evils resulting from separating a composition into maybe a dozen parts in order to record it. Not written so to be played, the music in consequence suffers greatly, some compositions even losing almost all their point because of this—it is ardently to be hoped not forever—necessary evil. One would strenuously object, when reading a book, if he were interrupted every three or four minutes. Changing record sides is similarly unpleasant, so that one can scarcely blame some exceptionally fastidious musicians if they are still a bit restrained in their praises of recorded music.



This, then, seems to us to be the most pressing problem now facing the record industry, perhaps, in fact, the most vulnerable spot in recorded music and the one that demands most quickly to be remedied. In brief, what is needed to restore the record business to its former flourishing state is a long-playing record, a disc that will, without losing any of the quality of tone to which we are now accustomed, play at least an entire movement from a symphony without a pause. Indeed, it is difficult to think of anything that could do more for the industry at the moment than such a disc. Precisely how it could be achieved, of course, we do not profess to know; we do not even know whether or not it is mechanically possible. But no one, so far as we are aware, has definitely stated that it is impossible. And

surely the ever-resourceful scientists, who have already accomplished such unbelievable wonders with sound reproduction, should be able to solve the problem. Long-playing records are used in sound pictures, and while they differ in some respects from the ordinary phonograph record, still the principle is essentially the same. It therefore seems not entirely inconceivable that some engineer, yearning to make record collectors happy, should be able to produce such a record. The demand for it obviously is pressing and world-wide, and the manufacturer who ultimately gives it to us will not only provide the stimulus so urgently needed by the industry; he will also add immeasurably to the musical value of records. Once a good long-playing record is available, all sorts of fascinating new possibilities will present themselves. Fields heretofore unbroken will be explored. New uses for mechanical music will be discovered, and listening to records will be an infinitely more delightful, as well as a great deal more intelligible, thing than it is at present. Let us therefore forget, at least for the moment, the sometimes rather exorbitant prices of records and the frequent blunders made in the choice of recording material. These are things that can be quickly remedied. Beyond certain refinements and polishing touches in recording methods, nothing new has been offered in the phonographic field for over five years. What is urgently needed is a long-playing record. Cannot some manufacturer find some way of giving us one?



Among the articles scheduled for early publication in *Disques* are:

- "Karl Muck," by *Herbert F. Peyser*.
- "Bruno Walter," by *Herbert F. Peyser*.
- "Polyphonophobia," by *Winthrop Parkhurst*.
- "The British Renaissance," by *Laurence Powell*.
- "Rimsky-Korsakow," by *Nicolas Slonimsky*.
- "Apollo and Dionysus," by *Isaac Goldberg*.

SUBSCRIPTIONS, INDEX AND BOUND VOLUMES

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CODE

The first letters in the record number indicate the manufacturer and all records are domestic releases unless the word **IMPORTED** appears directly under the number: B-Brunswick, C-Columbia, D-Decca, EB-Edison-Bell, FO-Fonotipia, G-National Gramophonic Society, HO-Homocord, O-Odeon, PA-Parlophon, PD-Polydor, R-Regal (English), and V-Victor.

The String Quartets of Beethoven

By JOSEPH COTTLER

Western man, *species humana*, symptom of degeneration of Matter (Jeans), reflecting on his strange career since his occupation of Earth, rests his eye lovingly on several cardinal strides. Some random points to chart are: Doric temple, Christianity, the integral calculus, fugue. . . . These are epochal climaxes. To take the special line of advance for which the fugue figures, we may certainly say that one of the highest points in the horizon is the Beethoven quartets. The term itself has rich connotation surpassed in sonorous power only by the more special term "last quartets of Beethoven," which gives out the deep reverberation of arcana.

The sense is that the quartets of Beethoven as a whole have a range beyond the limits of music itself. Their temper is the articulate temper of an era which has not yet passed. In them we find the transition from the social ideal of the eighteenth century (the quartet is the most elegant of social forms) to the heartfelt aspirations of the nineteenth, which gave a soul to each body, a freedom from every oppression, a natural law against human evil, and a moral law against the oppression of natural law. Through Beethoven we divine the figures of his compeers: Napoleon, Goethe, Kant. He alone is the musical spokesman of *Sturm und Drang*. At the time of his maturity there was no other musician even remotely trying to express similar emotions. One gets the impression from reading Thayer's exhaustive *Life of Beethoven* that, though he was feared, admired and patronized, there were few people capable or willing enough to like him. The last quartets in fact were shunned. About them it was whispered that the malady which had first stricken the composer deaf had now deranged him.

Beethoven's position is well enough known. What is less commonly recognized is the significance of his quartets. He himself regarded the string quartet as the purest musical form, and remained impervious to appeals to compose oratorio, opera, only to apply himself with fresh enthusiasm to this most difficult of form in the "regions of pure music." Again, the usual division of Beethoven's work into three periods finds its greatest justification in connection with the quartets, as each quartet falls well within its group.

Concerning the First Six Quartets, Op. 18

The portrait of Beethoven during these years is one in the heyday of his youth—his late twenties—settled in the aristocratic swirl of Vienna. He is addressed "Master," and is successfully busy with pupils and concerts. He has a servant and a horse, though the question of whether he ever rode the horse must remain unsettled. "What more do I want now?" he writes his brother. This son of an irresponsible drunkard has risen by virtue of his talent to a position of intimacy with nobility. His joking letters bespeak a light heart and a confident outlook. Life is good. He dresses well and vociferates brazenly in support of the French Commune. In the name of freedom: Bravo! His existence has the eager, rangy quality of youth and his mind healthily extraverterd. He swims with the current.

As an artist he finds in his path a form begun by C. P. E. Bach and brought

to perfection by Haydn and Mozart: the sonata. Now a formal process of this sort is a very important contribution of any age. First of all it is an evidence of faith and begets more faith, since it takes on the aspect of one more verity to postulate. The liver has one more truth to live for and create. At this point that formal postulate shows its double edge. In addition to being a fact of optimism, it is a tool of expression. Where there is machinery, there is production, as we know too well these days. This is the explanation of Bach's immense productivity and Beethoven's and anybody else's. Of course, in a faithless age a form might become formalism and there's an end to it. But then, until a new tool, a new faith, comes to it, that age remains speculative and barren. That is our case today. Perhaps our most vital musical thinker today, Schönberg, is quite unproductive. Add that the sonata structure, as Beethoven inherited it, was peculiarly fitted as a means of musical exchange, and you have the full explanation of why so clear a thinker should have cast all but his last quartets more or less in this form. In the Op. 18 group, in fact, he follows the form as closely as Haydn does, and the effect for social intercourse is delightful. The audience is expectant, and yet not required to think too deeply. There will be two themes exhibited. How pretty will they be? The first subject has been stated. The composer is modulating. Ah, there is a flourish. The second subject must be coming. What will it be like? Now let's repeat this exposition and get these themes firmly fixed. You will need to know them well to appreciate their fantastic disguises in the development, especially considering how ingenious our Beethoven is. . . .

For complete socialization there was one further convention. The four instruments, in their discourse about the relations of the two subjects, were conceived as four speakers in a dialogue. In the rudest quartets the first violin appropriated the lion's share of the talk, for he has the most honeyed tongue. If he offered an idea, he might even answer it himself, unless the 'cello opposed him. Meanwhile the two middle voices merely filled in for the sake of building up a harmony. Beethoven, however, maintains a remarkable balance, distributing the interest fairly in all the parts and thereby weaving a heavier texture of sound. But the convention of dialogue he uses, though in the best of taste, sparingly. Haydn abuses the convention and is, as a result, tiresome. But Beethoven, in these quartets, uses this with all the force of the unexpected. When you observe a phrase being bandied about, you may be sure that something is about to happen; the subject is entering a new and important phase. Now these simple matters of idiom must be understood before the pleasant genius of the Op. 18 group can be enjoyed, and the change that later overcame Beethoven appreciated.

The Op. 18 Group Itself

These six quartets are everything to be expected from the young master,—endowed with a gay life, and an admiration for Mozart and Haydn. Across the easily-graspable shape of the sonata plays the fragrant sentiment of youth in a gallant rhythm. Mark the facile wit, the entertaining ideas of the brilliant musician; the grace and fire, the affecting *cantabile*, the merry scherzo, the spirited rondo.

With slight differences, the literary associations that this work has induced in distinguished commentators are the same: Titania or Queen Mab, woodland murmurs, dreamy meditation. One sympathetic lady speaks of "a passage which

never fails to ravish me completely." She refers to the Allegro of No. 5. Beethoven himself told a friend that when he wrote the beautiful Adagio to No. 1, he definitely thought of the burial vault scene in *Romeo and Juliet*. And he gives the name "Grief" to the long introduction to the Rondo of No. 6. Only Richard Wagner, the arch-interpreter of music in terms of literature, refuses to waste any sentiment on the Op. 18 set, which he rather dismisses as trivial, Haydnish. But in those days, Wagner was keeping gross company in Valhalla.

All six quartets, then, have the same characteristics. Only a technical analysis can reveal their individual qualities. Yet when it struck me that out of these riches the perfect quartet of the period could be arranged by putting together the best of each of the first movements, with the best of each of the others—a sort of all-Beethoven Op. 18 team—I was at a loss for which movements to choose. (The idea is perfectly possible. Unlike his later periods, at this time the separate movements of a work are unrelated.) Well, then, to choose.

One could certainly not sacrifice the Allegro of the first, with its crisp, short theme that goes straight to the heart of things. And surely the tender gaiety of the second ought to be celebrated, if only on account of a remarkable dialectic passage it contains. Now the Third Quartet in D Major that begins *fugato* with a long phrase that the composer proceeds to dismember, with this whole work we can perhaps dispense. I, for one, wish it had not been composed, though even there we might suffer a pang of regret for the jolly gallop that finishes the work. The fourth in C Minor (the only number of this group in a minor key) is the most famous of the six. The melodic beauty of the sweeping striving theme, a little wild, probably kindles us into making it our favorite quartet of the six. The Scherzo, in fact, by its rigor and purity throws a long glance at the later Beethoven. The Minuet, for instance, is no periwigged, courtly divertissement; a minuet in name only, a sombre miniature of forceful feeling. It was written with some passion as the mistake in harmony—the forbidden sequence of fifths assigned to 'cello and first violin—in the 25th and 26th bars, shows. Beethoven, an impeccable theorist and honest musician always, could never have been guilty of the crime had he not been carried away by his subject. More so that the violation is unnecessary. In this connection there is an anecdote establishing Beethoven's arrogant character. A friend of his pointed out to him the error. Beethoven could not deny it. Consecutive fifths!

"And who forbids them?"

His friend had authority: Fux, Marpurg, Kornberger—everybody forbids them.

"Well, I allow them."

Perhaps the finest movement in the C Minor Quartet, however, is the whirlwind Finale. There is no movement so fascinating in the entire twenty-four, unless it be the Scherzo of the Sixth Quartet, which recalls to me that vital time in the development of jazz when every number was a rhythmic problem in untried syncopation. From that point of view the Scherzo in the B Flat Major Quartet is a gem built on a rhythmic device so cunning and yet so simple. This entire work is a Joy-of-life expression, even to the Finale of the Grief episode, which is only the other side of Joy, and yields at the last to the dominant vigor.

The so-called first period of Beethoven, it is said, is imitative of Mozart and Haydn. As regards the Op. 18 group, there is no imitation at all except for the Mozartian Fifth Quartet. The rest, in relation to the principles of Beethoven's predecessors, is an extension. The conventions, to be sure, had to be met. As a rule youth is conventional, and most so in its radicalism and concern with lost causes and doctrines of least sufficient reason. In these quartets, the melody flows in a not unusual way. Often they are just horizontal statements of chords in key. Their development is utterly positive, without any of the significant ambiguities of our composer's aftertime. Only two or three passages in the entire group give evidence of any uncertainties in tonality. We listen to a successful man whose problems are those of æsthetic balance—the niceties of life.

But Op. 18 is a work of genius. Let us be more reserved as to the third and fifth quartets. For the rest, however, musically and in their own way, Beethoven never surpassed them. Their sonorousness is overpowering. That is the great thing about Beethoven always, and is especially noticeable here. Every part is a speaking part. Therein lies his dramatic force; in the unexpected turn, the resourceful wit that never says the same thing twice. His implicit dictum, one feels, is: Invent! In the name of interest, invent! There is only one crime, and that is dullness.

"A great musician," one might have said in 1800, warmed by the amiable fire of these quartets. "And if he suffers he will be a great thinker."

The Approach to the Middle Period

He lived and suffered.

"As the leaves of Autumn fall and are withered, so hope has been blighted," he wrote in his will, feeling at thirty-two the approach of death. The buzzing in his ears was growing worse, and already he gazed with increasing agony at the bows moving across soundless violins. The world, the world of sound was shutting him out. It was sin enough that Ludwig van Beethoven should have a weakness, but that the weakness should be aural was to be deprived of the last ounce of strength. It meant the sacrifice of ordinary human society. But the shame that nearly destroyed him was that of becoming an object of public pity.

An internal defense mechanism began its work with him; contempt for people, alternating with deep sympathy for them, was the form of obsessions his self-pity took. Society he shunned. The activity of his mind changed its direction and had to grow in. There was one hope left him, arising from his yearning for woman, the hope of conjugal peace. But what chance on that score had the dumpy, eccentric, half-deaf, livid man? And though there still were friends and patrons and eternal hope, he admits to himself: "For thee, poor Beethoven, no happiness may be expected outside thyself. Thou wilt have to create everything within. Only in the ideal world shalt thou find her who loves thee!" And there is no longer an address to the world, a universal bond; but rather a personal force and refuge.

Wherever his attitude toward life may lead him, his integrity as an artist and the humility with which he worked are unquestionable. In 1794 he refused a commission to write quartets. He was yet inadequate, he thought. He let four years go by before he turned to the Op. 18 group, and finished them by 1800. But a year later he bade a friend to whom he had given the Quartet in F not to do

anything with it because "I have changed it greatly, having just learned properly to write quartets." Sixteen years later he was to characterize his earlier work even more broadly by saying that he had only just *then* learned how to compose!

Five years after Op. 18, years of mental crisis which separated him immeasurably from his former self, he began to work on the first of the five quartets produced in the middle period.

The Rasoumovsky Group, Op. 59

To one who has followed Beethoven through the quartets alone, as he conceivably might do, the Rasoumovsky group brings a distinct pause, as imperative as those scattered in the scores themselves. That the human soul can open out into such great horizons is as terrifying to think about as is our cosmogony. What can happen to man, that five years after *Romeo and Juliet*, he can see life, love and death with the theme of *Hamlet*?

A powerful change has swept over Beethoven. Op. 18 was directed by his sense of social unity. His fancy there was exuberant and filled the atmosphere with sensuous delight. At Op. 59 he can say, when a musician who examines the scores asks him blankly what in the world they mean: "Oh, they are not for you, but for a later age!"

In the themes at once he is another man. The earlier theme consisted of frank, simple interval relations. Now, the intervals are spreading out, and the harmonies are here and there taking diminished steps—diatonicism hinting at chromaticism. The sheer space of sound is being exploited. The composer, having more to say and that of deeper import, needs ampler limits. Within those limits he needs greater tonal power and he proposes double-stops for the strings, and conceives all the shades and tints for the orchestra. It is as though the deafer Beethoven became the more precious pure sound became . . . He needs more time for the elaboration of his subject, and so the works are each larger. On the other hand, if he needs more space, he can economize on some things. All the graceful embroidery, the dainty presence of the subject, is stripped almost clean. The witty bandying with the theme is gone, too; there are things in heaven and hell to dream instead. Most significant of all, the unique spirit of the composer displaces the conventions of his audience and modifies the sonata form and the even course of harmonic development.

Conventions are simple things because they deal in rule-of-thumb distinctions. Their symbol is a badge and their activity discrete. Now in times of pressure distinctions fall away. The badge loses its potency and activity becomes concrete. Such an internal pressure makes itself felt in this period of Beethoven's life. The artificial light which imparted a transparency to the form now is energized into an intense heat which fuses the parts and drives the thematic plot straightway through the movements with an unrest that sometimes doesn't die away with the end of the movement even, but continues into the next as does the Adagio of No. 1 and the Allegretto of No. 3, both of Op. 59. Here we have the origin of what today we call the tone-poem. In fact, just as Op. 18 must be discussed with analogies to the work of Mozart and Haydn, so, from Op. 59 on, the quartets have comparison only to the work of later musicians (Bach always excepted) whose entire source—the immediate present excepted—Beethoven is. The tone-poem, indeed, is a very

likely term for those full spiritual experiences, the Adagios, which to me is the movement most characteristic and original of Beethoven at this time. There, in each work, he is furthest from the world in a region where he rhapsodizes and reflects his melancholy in a rise and fall that knows no distinct theme but itself, from beginning to end. (Beethoven is said to have conceived the Adagio of the second Rasoumovsky while star-gazing and listening for the music of the spheres. The story may bear on the other side of truth but compare it in kind with the literary setting for the Adagio of No. 1, Op. 18—*Romeo and Juliet*!)

This unifying of all the analytic elements in a movement, so that transitions, recapitulation and coda develop spontaneously and without subordination, has a counterpart in the philosophy of a contemporary of Beethoven, Hegel, who sought to reconcile opposite concepts. In these quartets the reconciliation takes the form of abolishing the contrast between first and second subjects, which dualism the old sonata form postulated. The most arresting example of that is the first movement of the second quartet of Op. 59. It opens with two drastic chords which serve the purpose of a fanfare. Then comes the theme. A great deal can be written about this theme which is one of the most wonderful, I think, in all music. It is triangular in structure, that is, has two complementary sides that meet at the point of the highest note. You hear it softly, in unison. The contrast between the two which are yet one is as great as possible. The first half is an incisive upward phrase, like the *motif* for one of Wagner's demigods; but the answer is a dying fall with complete, tonic close, whose despair is all the more poignant that it began so stirringly. It is not a theme or melody. It is a generating idea, a matrix melody for melodies, a symbol,—Wagner knew his Beethoven perfectly as is more apparent in the last quartets.

The quality, then, that makes its appearance in the quartets of the middle period is that of the infinite possibilities of the naked musical phrase. Whereas the earlier group limited the idea in accordance with the sonata formula, this later group consists of movements of spontaneous musical flow. They are overcast with spiritual bodings, which, at times, blur their outlines as a fog does a landscape. But, to the observer, a fog may make a landscape intensely exciting, for it is only in such a state of saturation that he can project what shape he himself wills.

In Op. 59 the fugue makes its first quartet appearance. In 1800 Beethoven subscribed to an edition of J. S. Bach. But the fugues of Bach and Beethoven are quite different in point of view, just as the Russian themes which Beethoven agreed with his patron Rasoumovsky to use and which are the basis of the Finale of No. 1 and the Allegretto of No. 2, Op. 59, are hardly recognizably Russian. With Bach, the fugue appears static, like a room with mirrors in which the subject sees itself reflected from a multitude of facets; or the three-part fugal stasis of Catholicism. But follow Beethoven in the first quartet of Op. 59,—how concentrated his modulations are, angular, too impatient to reach to new tonalities by pleasant, easy stages; how the phrases jut out and in to each other's territory with sudden attacks, and it is clear that the fugue (a passage of the first movement of No. 1 and the entire Finale of No. 3, Op. 59) is mainly valuable to Beethoven as an effective form of violence.

(To be concluded in the August issue.)

THE RECORDS

Quartet in F Major, Op. 18, No. 1. Six sides. Léner String Quartet. Three 12-inch discs (C-67623D to C-67625D) in album. Columbia Set No. 58. \$4.50. Miniature Score: *Philharmonia No. 310*.

Quartet in G Major, Op. 18, No. 2. Six sides. Léner String Quartet. Three 12-inch discs (C-67306D to C-67308D) in album. Columbia Set No. 66. \$4.50. Miniature Score: *Philharmonia No. 311*.

Quartet in G Major, Op. 18, No. 2. Eight sides. Flonzaley Quartet. Four 10-inch discs (V-1218 to V-1221) in album. Victor Set M-7. \$6.50.

Quartet in D Major, Op. 18, No. 3. Six sides. Léner String Quartet. Three 12-inch discs (C-67346D to C-67348D) in album. Columbia Set No. 75. \$4.50. Miniature Score: *Philharmonia No. 312*.

Quartet in C Minor, Op. 18, No. 4. Six sides. Léner String Quartet. Three 12-inch discs (C-67284D to C-67286D) in album. Columbia Set No. 59. \$4.50. Miniature Score: *Philharmonia No. 313*.

Quartet in A Major, Op. 18, No. 5. Eight sides. Capet String Quartet. Four 10-inch imported discs (C-D1659 to C-D1662) in album. \$6. Miniature Score: *Philharmonia No. 314*.

Quartet in B Flat, Op. 18, No. 6. Six sides. Léner String Quartet. Three 12-inch discs (C-67287D to C-67289D) in album. Columbia Set No. 60. \$4.50. Miniature Score: *Philharmonia No. 315*.

Quartet in F Major, Op. 59, No. 1. Ten sides. Léner String Quartet. Five 12-inch discs (C-67243D to C-67247D) in album. Columbia Set No. 49. \$7.50. Miniature Score: *Philharmonia No. 316*.

Quartet in E Minor, Op. 59, No. 2. Eight sides. Léner String Quartet. Four 12-inch discs (C-67248D to C-67251D) in album. Columbia Set No. 50. \$6. Miniature Score: *Philharmonia No. 317*.

Quartet in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3. Eight sides. Léner String Quartet. Four 12-inch discs (C-67252D to C-67255D) in album. Columbia Set No. 51. \$6. Miniature Score: *Philharmonia No. 318*.

Quartet in E Flat (Harp), Op. 74. Eight sides. Capet String Quartet. Four 12-inch imported discs (C-L2248 to C-L2251) in album. \$8. Miniature Score: *Philharmonia No. 319*.

Quartet in F Minor, Op. 95. Six sides. Léner String Quartet. Three 12-inch discs (C-67274D to C-67276D) in album. Columbia Set No. 56. \$4.50. Miniature Score: *Philharmonia No. 320*.

Quartet in E Flat Major, Op. 127. Nine sides and *Quartet in B Major*: Scherzo Allegro, Op. 18, No. 6. One side. Flonzaley Quartet. Five 12-inch imported discs (V-DB1377 to V-DB1381) in album. \$12.50. Miniature Score: *Philharmonia No. 321*.

Quartet in B Flat, Op. 130. Ten sides. Léner String Quartet. Five 12-inch discs (C-67323D to C-67327D) in album. Columbia Set No. 70. \$7.50. Miniature Score: *Philharmonia No. 322*.

Quartet in C Sharp Minor, Op. 131. Ten sides. Capet String Quartet. Five 12-inch imported discs (C-L2283 to C-L2287) in album. \$10. Miniature Score: *Philharmonia No. 323*.

Quartet in A Minor, Op. 132. Ten sides. Capet String Quartet. Five 12-inch imported discs (C-L2272 to C-L2276) in album. \$10. Miniature Score: *Philharmonia No. 324*.

Quartet in F Major, Op. 135. Six sides. Léner String Quartet. Three 12-inch discs (C-67270D to C-67272D) in album. Columbia Set No. 55. \$4.50. Miniature Score: *Philharmonia No. 326*.

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Chiefly About Henry Cowell

*And, Incidentally, Paul Rosenfeld, Various Composers,
and Neglected Phonographic Opportunities*

By ISAAC GOLDBERG

Mr. Paul Rosenfeld, who has been writing in *Scribner's* for June about "The New American Music," has for years been one of my favorite critics, not only in music, but in letters and the arts. Not that I have always been able to find myself in agreement with those of his judgments that I could compare with my own experiences of similar products. I cannot remember the time when I have gone to critics for mere opinions; nor, having in turn engaged in professional criticism myself, do I recall a time when my main purpose was to indoctrinate the reader with my special point of view. Naturally, one hopes, as part of one's labors, to make one's reader appreciate one's personal approach. This is a different thing from expecting that reader to sneeze in agreement every time one takes a pinch of snuff. There is that in the critical temperament—even when it is so buoyant and mischievous as George Jean Nathan's—which makes it sparkle at the thought of rousing controversy, of inducing a healthy disagreement. No true critic ever respected a person's whose mind could be too easily changed. Such minds are not worth changing. As for those whose minds cannot be changed at all . . . *eh bien!* . . . those are not minds.

Mr. Rosenfeld maintains an independence that in itself is tonic. We may not always admire a certain wilful opacity of language that, at its worst, reads like a stilted translation from the French. We may believe that, while profiting by the facile yet not insubstantial contributions of psychoanalysis, he leans too heavily upon esoteric interpretation. We may deplore his determination to draw a not necessarily clear distinction between music as art and music as "entertainment." And certainly, as we read his contribution to the June *Scribner's*, we may—on the basis of what we have heard of the composers to whom he pays such unstinted compliments—decide that he has been hearing more than meets the ear. Yet these disagreements hardly alter our regard for the gentleman.

Why should this be so? Well, first of all, his independence appeals to a like spirit of intellectual courage. It serves, by example, to bring out a like courage in his readers. Again, what he writes is patently founded upon first-hand knowledge of his material. The merely vapory, deliquescently impressionistic critic is too ready to take refuge in the dangerous truth that art deals with emotional variables, with matters of personal reaction, and that therefore—it is a fragile *therefore*—one man's opinion is quite as good as another's. It is not. Nor is the evaluation of art nothing more than the phrasing of unconsidered emotional reactions. A tear, as the poet wrote, is (at least, it may be) an intellectual thing; there is, to matters æsthetic, a scientific aspect. Now, Rosenfeld, sufficiently the scientist to understand his emotions about art, writes of them with a fecundating knowledge.

Whom does he select as the bright hopes of contemporary American music? (And remember that America includes the entire Western Hemisphere.) Henri Villa-Lobos of Rio de Janeiro, Carlos Chavez of the City of Mexico, Carl Ruggles

and Roger Sessions of New England, Aaron Copland of New York City, Roy Harris of Oklahoma, and the Italo-Frenchman, Edgar Varèse, settled in New York City. "Many other musical newcomers surround them," he adds, "suggesting a proximate increase of their group. Henry Cowell's extraordinarily sonorous piano concerto, certainly last season's most important American production, very nearly places this young Californian in it." There are still others: Virgil Thomson, Charles F. Ives, Adolph Weiss, George Antheil, Leo Ornstein, Dane Rudhyar . . . It will not surprise you, if you know Rosenfeld's attitude, to find that he studiously omits the name of George Gershwin, which I should unblushingly place in his first list. But that is ink from another bottle. For the moment, I am concerned with the personality of one of the composers who just falls short of entering into the circle of Rosenfeld's seven. "*Sept, ils sont sept!*"

I refer to Henry Cowell, through whose editorial efforts, indeed, so many of the compositions of Rosenfeld's pléiade owe their appearance in print. A number of the others—certainly not as many as Mr. Rosenfeld dubs with the accolade of his careful prose—deserve special consideration; perhaps I shall speak of them in later articles.

II

I am thinking of Mr. Cowell as I met him recently, and not for the first time, at a mixed gathering in Gershwin's modernist penthouse apartment on top of 33 Riverside Drive. There were a couple of wealthy young women, who shall remain anonymous; they had come with some Tin Pan Alley songs of their own devising, and I envied them their courage in letting them be heard in those surroundings. There was an Italian journalist and his American wife. . . . There was Oscar Levant, the amazingly tricky young pianist who wrote *Lady, Play Your Mandolin* and who gives such poker-faced imitations of the great pianists. . . . And Vladimir Dukelsky, the Noel-Cowardy young Russian who, under his real name, writes symphonies for Koussevitzky's Boston orchestra, operas in Russian, sonatas and such; and who, as Vernon Duke, does musical comedies for the London and Gotham stages. (Perhaps you have whistled his Garrick Gaiety tune, *I Am Only Human After All*, which is set to "swell" words by E. Y. Harburg and Ira Gershwin. . . .)

Cowell, that evening, was to me thoroughly admirable,—the very model of what a man with new, difficult theories should be when confronted by the incredulous, half-concealed taunts of the bourgeoisie. Some of the other guests had a sketchy notion of what he was noted for. They knew that he lectured at the New School for Social Research . . . that he had invented a manner of playing which was called "tone clusters" . . . that he played the piano not only from before but from behind . . . that not only did he play on the keys, but plucked the strings with a piano pizzicato. . . . How well I recall a recital of new music in Boston, when Cowell's playing of his neo-pianistic compositions drew hysterical laughter from half the audience, and, from a few, the exclamations of a new experience. . . . And how well, too, I remember the gentle persuasiveness of his voice and his manner. Cowell falls easily into the suavity of the lecturer. His explanations to the gathering at Gershwin's that night were succinct, patient, unostentatiously authoritative, as one might not have expected them to be from the author of "New Musical Resources." Men with a new cause are hardly distinguished for self-control. For Cowell, it

is hard to understand why we should be so smugly content with our present-day instruments, their timbres, their ranges, their technical scope. He has a deep sense of relativity in the range of musical art. Things were not always as they are; why should evolution pause, out of deference to our conceit and to our inertia? "*Eppur si muove!*"

Mr. Cowell faces the future, as it were, on all fronts. He would at once broaden and deepen musical resources. He lectures upon the theory of harmonics and its implications for our new chord systems. He discovers new rhythms and, demanding a more scientific research into their possibilities for the new music, encourages scientists to construct an instrument that may give us, at our command, any set combination of contrasting rhythms. . . . He writes the compositions that he calls for. . . . He plays them. . . . He is the Complete Musician, in theory and in practice.

Mr. Rosenfeld mentions the extraordinary sonorities that Cowell can summon from the piano. I am of those who are convinced that they are not mere *loudnesses*. Cowell's tone-clusters, which are struck by the elbow along a diatonic, a chromatic, or a mixed range, at times produce a most imposing effect. The piano seems to acquire new stature,—new expressiveness. It thunders. Yet it would be error to imagine that Cowell is interested only in volume. He produces eerie wisps of tone by skilfully brushing the strings in harp-fashion. It has been suggested that much of what he achieves by his various techniques of plucking and brushing the piano strings could be done more simply on the harp. The effect, however, is something that I have never heard produced on that instrument. Cowell, beyond a doubt, has added to the tonal and the expressive range of the pianoforte,—to its majesty of utterance, to its delicacy of suggestion. Nor does he, like so many modernists, eschew melody or suggestiveness. At the same time, he manipulates his material like the true artist, considering it first of all as plastic sound.

The average European composer, wrote Mr. Rosenfeld in the article that started off these reflections, "is excessively doctrinaire," while "the American is agreeably naïve. We only rarely find him, as even the best of his transatlantic fellows, arriving at the articulation of his idea by the circuitous route of theory. He is far more intuitive, expressing his coming world-feeling spontaneously. In this lies his advantage. For spontaneity, naïveté in music is like grace in the spiritual life: the sign of strength, regeneration and inspiration; and the sole satisfaction." I am afraid that I cannot follow St. Paul in these uncertain divagations. There is more naïveté, certainly, and more intuitiveness, in Gershwin than in any of Rosenfeld's magic seven. And surely his chosen composers simply bulge with theories that they drive over most circuitous routes. Just what grace in spiritual life may be, I cannot pretend to know. As often as not, however, it has seemed to me to be—whatever I could catch of it—a token of weakness, retarded development and lack of inspiration. To return, however, to Cowell: he does not pretend to be free of theory; it is rather a late date in the development of music to aspire to such simplicity. Yet his vast scientific knowledge does not impede the directness of his expression. He has written some unashamedly "sweet" music (is life all "bitterness?"). He is not afraid to use the associative elements of tone, but—and this is the important consideration—he does not allow it to replace the æsthetic, the artistic manipulation of sound-matter.

As for his world-feeling—and I am not sure that this is a relevant aspect of a composer's work—Cowell has had, in his travels, plenty of opportunity to give it scope and depth. All over Europe, and even into the economic wilds of Russia, he has carried his various talents. Recently two of his compositions were published in Russia by the Music Section of the State Printery,—the first compositions by an American to be thus honored. (They are *Lilt of the Reel* and *Tiger*.) To Cuba he brought the excitement of his theory and practice, and from it he returned with news of a new nativism among the island's composers. The man, by nature, is a sower of seeds and a gatherer of harvests. He is the Director, North American Section, of The Pan American Association of Composers. He is the founder of *Modern Music*, the San Francisco quarterly that publishes many of the compositions over which Mr. Rosenfeld grows so eloquent. This year we shall miss him in America because he received one of the Guggenheim traveling fellowships and will go abroad again to write, lecture, teach, publish, study and what not else, in typically Cowellian multifariousness.

III

I was not at all surprised to find Mr. Cowell an enthusiast about the potentialities of modern invention in the service of music study. We spoke especially of the phonograph with reference to its possible application to the modern, and the modernist, composer. It seemed a pity that gramophiles (cannot someone find a better word to describe the phonograph "fan?") should be condemned only to *read* about the experimenters, and not to *hear*. Of course, the ready answer is that, no matter how good much of this music may be, it would not be profitable for the companies to issue releases of it to a meagre purchasing public. True, and sad. . . . Yet perhaps a little more coöperation among gramophoniacs could remedy, in part, the situation?

We have Little Theatres the country over in which non-commercial plays are presented largely for the love of the art. It was such a Little Theatre that first sponsored Eugene O'Neill. Why not a phonographic organization analogous to these theatres,—a closely-banded group of musical experimenters who would support an organization that specialized in music unlikely to be recorded by the regular companies? That we have failed to make fullest use of gramophonic opportunity is an oft-reiterated platitude. Repeated hearings are more important than anything else for an understanding of what our new spirits are trying to achieve. The phonograph is the only sure means of ensuring such needed repetition. What I should like to see—and hear—would be the issue, with each number of such a quarterly as *Modern Music*, of a phonographic recording of the published piece. There are many musicians who are not pianists,—certainly not good enough to get, from the printed page alone, a sufficient notion of the new music. With the score in hand, and the disc on the machine, this unpleasant situation would be effectively conquered.

As to writing especially for the disc, I leave that for the moment aside, although I am certain that composers, in failing to write specially for the various types of mechanical reproduction, have missed valuable opportunities. It is as if authors, with all the advantages of printing, had preferred to remain in the manuscript stage.

The Symphonic Age

By DOROTHY E. NICHOLS

Every age selects its particular instrument, one which universally expresses the period, and symbolizes it to later generations. In spite of the French newspaper's radio poll which voted first place in popularity to the accordion, I have no hesitation in naming the symphony orchestra as the musical symbol of our day.

Only a few years ago to be a patron of a symphony series was a mark of cultural distinction. Now orchestra enthusiasts are as common as college graduates.

The orchestra appeals both to highbrows and to beginners, to new listeners, young listeners, musically trained and musically ignorant. Its bigness and its dramatic qualities excite the imagination.

It is like modern industry, one big thing made up of many parts, and suits our age as simple instruments suited handicraft times. Say the word *pastoral* and say the word *flute* and our mental picture is almost identical. We associate the romance of the early renaissance period with the lute. The sixteenth century calls up sounds of interweaving voices. Say Bach and you think organ. The eighteenth century had its string quartets. The nineteenth was the century of the piano.

It was an age of rampant individualism, of which the product was the star—actor, musician, poet, composer: half-mad romantics, genuine and imitation. Giant composers and giant performers, Liszt, Chopin, Paderewski,—what instrument was better calculated to show off a star performer than the piano?

By the end of the century the piano had become a universal instrument. The concert audience appreciated the marvels of the performance because they had tried to play the piano at home. It was the one instrument for which all music could be arranged, and the tunes, at least, picked out by anyone. But when modern orchestration came in the piano went out. You cannot play Wagner on the piano—but you can play him on the phonograph.

Political changes have much to do with music, because they are both manifestations of changing thought or custom. The church's domination, the rule of princes, influenced the determination of the instruments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Democratic government did away with the petty prince and the supremacy of the string quartet which he had maintained by his court concerts.

Beethoven was a nineteenth century pianist, but he closed the eighteenth century and opened the twentieth. He turned his back on the princes and reached for our day of large and skilful orchestras playing for audiences of the people. We have realized his ideal with our large cities which maintain symphony orchestras as a matter of course, these orchestras playing to audiences of six and ten thousand. The radio now has added a few zeros to these figures. In his treatment of the symphony Beethoven was a hundred years ahead of his time. We can measure with some exactness as we observe him now a best seller, the backbone of concert programs.

What it means to be a hundred years ahead of your time can be best imagined by knowing the type of performance his work had in his own day. Robert Haven Schauffler, in his book on Beethoven, describes a concert which the master gave in 1808. It was a composer's concert, producing all new works, and this one eve-

ning's program included first performances of the *Pastoral* and the C Minor Symphonies, besides a pianoforte concerto, an aria, choruses, and a culminating Fantasia.

For the program not one full rehearsal had been held. The soloist could not handle the aria, Beethoven stopped the orchestra in the middle of a passage where a cue had been missed, the chorus was poor. The hall was unheated and the audience so small that years later a hearer spoke of himself as having been one of fifty who heard Beethoven's Fifth Symphony at its first performance.

Vienna was at this time the musical capital of the world. Its leading critic reported the C Minor as "a big symphony, much worked out and very long." Another member of the audience was struck by the 'cello part, which had "lots of business in it."

II

We are hardly aware of how new the symphony orchestra is. Not alone is broadcasting a product of the machine age, but the instruments of the orchestra are new inventions. It strikes us forcibly when Berlioz, who first realized the possibilities of instrumentation, outlines his idea of what an ideal conservatory of music should teach. Had his ideas been carried out the Paris Conservatoire of 1840 would have been a modern school. His recommendations serve as a revelation, curiously enough, of the newness of the orchestra.

In the sixth letter of the second volume of his reminiscences, he suggests classes in rhythm, in music history, he thinks that the study of pizzicato might be helpful, and asks for classes in viola and percussion.

But it is in his remarks on conducting that he most amazes us. He advises courses in Instrumentation and Conducting, for he says in speaking of the latter subject, "there is one more art indispensable to the conductor, namely, that of *reading the score* [the italics are his]. He who employs a simplified score, or a simple first violin part, as is often done in our day, more especially in France [he adds a note that the Conservatoire concerts were actually conducted thus], cannot detect half the mistakes in the performance; and if he does point out a fault, exposes himself to some such answer as this from the musician addressed: What do you know about it? You have not got my part—one of the least of the inconveniences arising from this deplorable system."

Shades of Toscanini! It makes us wonder with a start what we are now doing that will seem to another generation as preposterous as this seems to us.

Berlioz was a transition figure and suffered accordingly. He wrote for the modern orchestra but his performances were often under eighteenth century conditions. Especially was there one court surviving that makes this contrast vivid. It was at Hechingen, and Berlioz writes this amusing description of his concert there:

[There were] eight violins in all, three of them very feeble, three tenors (violas), two 'cellos, and two basses . . . The pastor and registrar at Hechingen plays the first bass in a manner to satisfy the most exacting of composers. The first flute, the first oboe, and the first clarinet are excellent, though the flute does occasionally indulge in those fanciful ornamentations with which I found fault at Stuttgart. The seconds among the

wind instruments are passable. The two bassoons and the two horns are not quite all that could be desired. As for the trumpets, the trombone (there is only one) and the kettledrum, one could have wished that they were absolutely silent—they knew nothing

I wrote the necessary notes in pencil upon the tenor parts, leaving out the third and fourth horns as we had only first and second. T— played the first harp part on the piano. The Prince of Hechingen stood beside the kettle-drummer to count his bars for him and make him come in in time. (!) I suppressed all the passages in the trumpet parts which we agreed were beyond the scope of the two performers. The trombone alone was left to its devices, but as it was wise enough only to play those notes with which it was familiar, such as B flat, D, F, and carefully avoided all others, it almost shone by its silence. You ought to have seen the wonderful effects produced by this music on the numerous audience assembled by his highness in this charming concert room.

Germany was at this time the most musical country in Europe, but the difficulties of obtaining an adequate orchestra in the cities where Berlioz performed his works must have been harrowing to him, however amusing the story he makes of his trials is to us now.

In a letter to Heine, he writes: "One member of the orchestra, a M. L., an excellent artist, well versed in musical literature, had only studied the harp for a year and was therefor a good deal alarmed at the test to which he was likely to be put by my Second Symphony. Besides, his harp was an old-fashioned thing, with pedals of simple action, which do not admit of the execution of modern music. Fortunately, the harp part of *Harold* is extremely easy, and M. L. worked so hard for five or six days that he acquitted himself most honorably—at the general rehearsal. On the evening of the concert, he was seized with a panic at the important moment; he stopped short in the introduction and left the tenor solo to play alone.

"This was our only mishap, and though the public never even perceived it, M. L. reproached himself bitterly for some days, in spite of all my efforts to make him forget it."

But there were thrills to be had even in these scanty performances. "You should have seen the excited look of the band in the intervals between the practices. Schmidt (an astounding double-bass) tore the skin off the forefinger of his right hand at the beginning of the pizzicato passage of the 'Orgie,' but he went on, not thinking of stopping for such a trifle, or caring for its bleeding, merely contenting himself with changing the finger."

III

Accounts of such performances not only entertain us but they fill us with a sense of superiority, always a pleasant state of mind to be in. We are prone, particularly in matters of size, to think we have grown. We make much of the Roxy orchestra which has been "increased to two hundred musicians," so we are reminded each Sunday morning. Such a size would not have overwhelmed Berlioz. When he was asked if he were not the man who composed music for five hundred players, he replied, no, that he often wrote for four hundred and fifty.

Strauss had an orchestra of two hundred musicians to play waltzes. But for really impressive numbers I wonder where we would find the equal of Berlioz' concert given after the Industrial Exposition in Paris in the "Fabulous Forties."

I engaged nearly everyone in Paris of any worth, [so he opens his account of it] either as a chorus-singer or instrumentalist, for the grand concert, and succeeded in collecting a body of one thousand and twenty-two performers.

My thousand and twenty-two artists went all together, like the performers in a first-rate quartet. I had two sub-conductors, (one) who led the wind instruments and (another) in command of the percussion instruments. I had also five choirmasters, one in the center and the others at the four corners of the choral body. To these was entrusted the task of conveying my movements to those singers who were unable to observe them in consequence of having their backs turned to me. Thus there were seven conductors, who never lost sight of me for a moment, and our eight arms, although far removed from each other, rose and fell simultaneously with incredible precision. Hence the miraculous unanimity which so astonished the public . . .

Included in the program was the prayer from *Moïse* (encored), in which the twenty-five harpists, instead of playing the arpeggios in simple notes, played them in chords in four parts, and by thus quadrupling the number of the strings, gave the effect of a hundred harps . . .

. . . and lastly, the chorus of the Consecration of the Poignards from the *Huguenots* which literally electrified the audience. I had multiplied the soli of this sublime piece by twenty, and consequently there were eighty bass voices for the parts of the three monks and of Saint-Bris. The impression it made on the performers and those nearest to the orchestra exceeded anything hitherto experienced. As for me, I was seized with a fit of nervous trembling, and my teeth chattered as though I were in a violent fever. Notwithstanding the acoustic defects of the place, I do not think that such an effect in music has often been produced, and I regretted that Meyerbeer was not present. This terrible piece, which one might say had been written with electric fluid, by a gigantic galvanic pile, seemed to be accompanied by thunder-claps and sung by tempests.

The machine age and the worship of nature mix even in Berlioz' speech. He concludes fittingly: "I was in such a state after this scene that the concert had to be stopped for some time."

And the eighteenth century, which we are inclined to patronize still more, had its own ideas of size. In 1784, at the Handel Commemoration in Westminster Abbey, the *Messiah* was performed with a chorus of two hundred and sixty-seven. This is not so surprising as that the orchestra numbered two hundred and forty-two, a hundred and forty-nine in the string section, a half dozen each of flutes and trombones, a dozen each of trumpets and horns, and twenty-six bassoons and twenty-six oboes. This really was not bad for a beginning.

It leaves us no superiority in size, and recently one of the great symphony conductors—I believe it was Bruno Walter—said that our very excellence in performance was a decadent sign, as this skill in execution always follows an age of creativeness.

It must be admitted that creation is superior to performance or even appreciation. Still, the creativeness of our own times is a question difficult to meet. An age can scarcely judge its own productivity. While Brahms was still alive few dared to place his name beside Beethoven's. We have a man in Finland who must be placed somewhere, and then there are the revolutionaries.

But suppose it is an inferior age in which we live. The artist would of course prefer the stimulus of a creative age. A painter would wish to be a contemporary of Botticelli, Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael. But the layman might well wish to come after, even in the decadence, when he had the finished works of these masters to contemplate as a whole.

ORCHESTRA



BERLIOZ
V-W1141
and
V-W1142
IMPORTED

BENVENUTO CELLINI: *Overture*. Three sides and
LES TROYENS A CARTHAGE: *Overture*. One side. Paris
Symphony Orchestra conducted by Pierre Monteux.
Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Miniature Score: (Benvenuto Cellini) Eulenburg No. 622.

One of the finest phonographic performances of recent months was the Monteux recording of Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique*, reviewed in the March issue of *Disques*. There are those who have difficulty in negotiating Berlioz painlessly, but regardless of one's opinion of the man and his music there could be little doubt but that Monteux's reading and the recording were in all respects superlatively admirable. All the fine qualities of recording and performance that marked that set are to be found in similar abundance in this recording of the *Overture to Benvenuto Cellini*, played by the same artists who performed so nobly in the *Symphonie Fantastique*. Presumably, the recording engineers, too, are the same, for the reproduction is similarly accurate and realistic.

Written between 1834 and 1837, when Berlioz was at the height of his powers, the opera was hounded, from the very beginning, by bad luck. Berlioz' ever active imagination had been inflamed with "certain episodes in the life of Benvenuto Cellini," he relates in his *Memoirs*; and he was "so unlucky as to think they offered an interesting and dramatic subject for an opera. So I begged Léon de Wailly and Auguste Barbier—the terrible poet of *Iambes*—to make me a libretto on the subject." When completed, the libretto was far from satisfactory, and, to make matters worse, the rehearsals went badly, the musicians, singers and conductor, Habeneck, performing their tasks listlessly and without noticeable enthusiasm. When the opera was produced in 1838, the *Overture*, Berlioz says, "received exaggerated applause, but the rest was hissed with admirable energy and unanimity."

The *Overture* makes effective use of material drawn from the opera. It is exceedingly lively and brilliant stuff, and it receives from Monteux the crisp, energetic performance that it needs in order to make it plausible. The violent opening is followed by a passage, in pizzicato notes for the basses, that is based on the air from the Cardinal's address in the last act. The recording and playing in this part are singularly clear and effective. In the recording of the *Symphonie Fantastique* the playing of the woodwinds was notable, and precisely the same can be said of this set. The brass, especially near the end, where the tune of the Cardinal's address is given to the full orchestra with a formidable brass choir blazing away magnificently, is altogether admirable.

Les Troyens à Carthage is the second part of the work, *Les Troyens*, which Berlioz hoped would be his masterpiece. Like *Benvenuto Cellini* and, indeed, most of Berlioz' works, it failed to win the public's affection. The *Overture* is here recorded for the first time. It is excellently played, and the music has life, brilliance and substance.



STOCK
V-7387

{ SYMPHONIC WALTZ, Op. 8. Two sides. Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Frederick Stock. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

WAGNER
V-7386

{ TANNHAUSER: *Fest March*. One side and
LOHENGRIN: *Prelude to Act 3*. One side. Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Frederick Stock. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Miniature Score: (Lohengrin) Philharmonia No. 39.

Frederick Stock, through his long association with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, has become one of the best-liked and most reliable conductors in America. As a composer, however, he is not so well known, though now and then one or another of his works appears on the Chicago Orchestra's programs. The recording of his Symphonic Waltz, Op. 8, therefore, comes as something of a mild surprise, for it isn't often that the local manufacturers summon sufficient boldness to record any save those works which are pretty familiar to most record collectors and hence are likely to enjoy a tolerably wide sale.

The Symphonic Waltz was written in 1907 and published in 1910. It is frequently played by the Chicago Orchestra. The following account of the work, written by Mr. Stock, is taken from the program notes of the Chicago Orchestra, compiled by Felix Borowski:

Some years ago Theodore Thomas played a very meritorious work by Alexander Ritter, which also was called a "Symphonic Waltz"; and this title made such a deep impression upon the writer of these lines that after that time he contemplated most seriously composing first a "Symphony" and then a "Waltz." But it happened that he was unable to complete the symphony before the commencement of this season [the seventeenth season of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra concerts], and for this reason he thought it best to combine these two titles and compose something that would suit them both—and the listener as well.

As to the waltz itself, we don't think that it should stand in need of either comparison or analysis, although it is meant to be symphonic—or at least pretends to be so. It is written in the key of D Major and in 3-4 time, just like the *Beautiful Blue Danube* by Johann Strauss, but the themes are treated in more elaborate fashion. We trust fully that what is good in it will make itself felt in true waltz-like fashion—let us say spontaneously—and that its pretentious title will fully protect it against undue or unbecoming popularity.

Frequently we have been asked to whom the waltz was to be dedicated—a question which until now has not been answered satisfactorily. It is not more than natural that a composer should feel inclined to dedicate all the good things he writes (and in his opinion, of course, all his things are good, and more than that) to his own beloved self, and so the writer of this waltz had at first intended to do, when the happy thought occurred to him that it would be more appropriate, and also more unique, to dedicate the work under discussion (in whose behalf too much has been said already) "To all his friends."

The Symphonic Waltz is not very exciting, but it has an engaging swing, and it is elaborately developed and orchestrated. Perhaps, indeed, its chief weaknesses lie in its elaborate development and heavy orchestration. The waltz, essentially, is a simple, joyous thing; clothed in too elaborate and pretentious attire, it sways a bit awkwardly, like a person dancing in uncomfortable shoes. The piece is scored for a large orchestra, comprising three flutes (the third interchangeable with a

piccolo), two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, kettledrums, bass drum, cymbals, side drum, triangle, glockenspiel, castanets, tambourine, harp and strings. Conducted by the composer and played by the fine band with which he has been so closely identified for so many years, the work thus has the advantage of being performed in as authentic a manner as possible. The recording is a fine piece of work.



The two Wagner numbers are magnificently done. The march from Act 2 of *Tannhäuser*, which was performed so splendidly in the Bayreuth Festival set of the opera, receives a first-rate orchestral performance here, and the powerful, yet not excessively amplified, recording adds to its impressiveness. The Prelude to Act 3 of *Lohengrin*, in this recording, surpasses any of the other versions with which we are familiar.

LISZT

B-90163
and
B-90164

LES PRÉLUDES: *Symphonic Poem*. Four sides. Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Oscar Fried. And

B-90165
and
B-90166

MAZEPPA: *Symphonic Poem*. Four sides. Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Oscar Fried.
Four 12-inch discs in album. Brunswick Set No. 32. \$6.

Miniature Scores: Eulenburg Nos. 449 and 452.

Of these two symphonic poems, *Mazeppa* will probably be of most interest, for *Les Préludes*, in addition to the somewhat excessive attention it is given in the concert hall, has already been recorded several times; and one of those versions—Mengelberg's—is of such high excellence that it would take an extraordinarily fine conductor, orchestra and recording to equal it, much less surpass it. Compared to Mengelberg's stirring reading, Fried's seems quiet and tame. There is thus little to say of the set, save that it is a moderately successful piece of recording and playing.

Mazeppa is the sixth of Liszt's twelve symphonic poems, and it and *Les Préludes* are the only ones of the twelve that have thus far received any attention from the manufacturers. It is enjoyable music, a little too pompous, over-assertive and glittering, but nonetheless far from dull. Liszt's skill with the orchestra served him well in this piece, and the terrible ride of the hero is vividly pictured. The means he uses are not strikingly subtle ones, but they are effective. The recording and playing, as in *Les Préludes*, are adequate, but scarcely distinguished.

BOIELDIEU
C-G50293D

CALIPH OF BAGDAD: *Overture*. Two sides. Symphony Orchestra conducted by Frederick Weissmann.
One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

Boieldieu's music is not very impressive, but Dr. Weissmann plays it acceptably, and the recording is clear and full.

**MENDELSSOHN**

D-KF555

to

D-KF558

IMPORTED

SYMPHONY NO. 4 in *A* (*Italian*), Op. 90. Eight sides. Orchestre Poulet conducted by Gaston Poulet.
Four 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 420.

GOLDMARK

V-9927

to

V-9931

RUSTIC WEDDING SYMPHONY, Op. 26. Ten sides. Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Robert Heger.
Five 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-103. \$7.50.

The Mendelssohn Symphony, one of the most ambitious recording enterprises of the Decca Company to be reviewed in *Disques*, is unhappily also one of the least successful. Mendelssohn, to be enjoyed today on the phonograph, needs good recording, and the recording in a large portion of this set is frankly mediocre. It seems unequal to the task of reproducing throughout the eight record sides the efforts of the Poulet Orchestra with the balance, clarity and volume which we nowadays expect in a good set of records. Nor can the playing be characterized in very laudatory terms; it is, as in the *Andante*, adequate in parts, but elsewhere it is labored, forced, without sparkle and glow. And sparkle and glow, above all else, are what this Symphony needs.

The work deserves to be better known than it is in America, where opportunity to hear it is not often extended. It is a graceful and imaginative piece of writing, in which clarity, gaiety and freshness are always in evidence. The lively *Finale*, a *Saltarello* (a popular Italian dance), is said to have been inspired by a Carnival Mendelssohn witnessed while in Rome. Such a work, it can readily be imagined, would make an exceptionally attractive set if it were competently produced. This is the only available version of the work—Odéon has recorded, with indifferent success, the *Andante*,—and so it will have to suffice until some other manufacturer, anxious to give us something that has not already been done half a dozen times, decides to turn loose a first-rate orchestra, conductor and group of recording engineers on the Symphony. In the meantime, it is possible to form an idea of the character of the work from these records.

The Goldmark Symphony, now issued on the regular Victor monthly supplement, was reviewed on page 123 of the May, 1931, issue, when it appeared as the feature on Victor's Educational List No. 10.

**FRANCK
D'INDY**

B-90167

and

B-90168

LE CHASSEUR MAUDIT: *Symphonic Poem*. (César Franck)
Three sides and

FERVAAL: *Introduction to Act I*, Op. 40. (d'Indy) One side.
Lamoureux Orchestra conducted by Albert Wolff.
Two 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

Reviewed, from the Polydor pressings, on page 170 of the June, 1931, issue.

ENESCO

V-AM1986

and

V-AM1987

IMPORTED

ROUMANIAN RHAPSODY No. 1 in A. Four sides.
Bucharest Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by George
Georgescu. Two 10-inch discs. \$1.25 each.

V-AN305

IMPORTED

ROUMANIAN POEM. Two sides. Bucharest Philharmonic
Orchestra conducted by George Georgescu.
One 12-inch disc. \$1.75.

A better and far more charming method of breaking the annoying Eighteenth than going to a speakeasy to be thoroughly fleeced would be to bring the stuff home and there attack it diligently while giving ear to some such records as these admirable ones from Bucharest. They are superbly adapted for such benevolent purposes, and once the thing starts properly, indeed, we confidently predict the gradual extinction of speakeasies and the consequent transference of sin over to the otherwise impeccable home, so resoundingly lauded as the final stronghold of the recognized sanctities in all democratic and hence really civilized lands. Although various eminent authorities have often testified with affecting eloquence to the beneficial results of taking music and alcohol together, the subject of the phonograph and alcohol has somehow been sedulously avoided. That it has almost persuades one to toy with the ghastly belief that possibly Prohibition may be mildly successful after all. The two (alcohol and music, of course) complement each other so perfectly that now that the phonograph has at last made it possible to have them simultaneously a standard and learned work on the subject is badly needed. We need competent advice as to the proper liquid refreshments to accompany Bach, Beethoven, Johann Strauss, Brahms, Strawinsky. . . . But the list, of course, could be extended indefinitely. Whoever undertakes the task will surely earn the sincere gratitude of countless blear-eyed collectors. It would be a formidable job, calling for immense experience, tireless research, and faultless taste, but it doesn't require much imagination to see that it would be a superlatively enjoyable one. Moreover, probably a good many bibulous concert-goers, once shown that music can be plausibly heard in the home by means of the phonograph, could be lured into the still much too modest group of record collectors. Such a work would thus not only increase the pleasure of record collectors; it would, in addition, increase the number of record collectors and so materially benefit the whole industry. Listening to music would become the rather bawdy and joyous experience it should be rather than the somewhat stiff and awkward business it is at present.

But to have done with beautiful dreams and return to the gloomy business of assessing the value of these records. They bring several new names to the record repertory: a new conductor, a new orchestra, and Georges Enesco, well known through his violin records, in the capacity of a composer. Enesco was born in Liveni (Moldau, Roumania) in 1881. At the age of 13 he went to Paris, where he studied under Gédalge, Massenet and Fauré. His *Roumanian Poem*, here so admirably recorded and played, was brought out when he was only 16 years old. Later he traveled extensively through Europe as a violin virtuoso. Enesco, besides his talents as a composer and violinist, is also an excellent conductor, and at



Bucharest he has introduced many modern compositions.

The *Roumanian Rhapsody No. 1*, the first of *Trois Rhapsodies Roumaines*, is frequently heard in concert. In it Enesco makes abundant use of folk songs, and his treatment of the material is unfailingly felicitous. Both the *Rhapsody* and the *Poem* are richly and colorfully orchestrated, and both are full of brisk, piquant tunes. In recording this music, one gathers the impression that the Bucharest Orchestra had a thoroughly fine time of it; its playing, sparkling, warm, intense and free from any awkward stiffness, is delightfully spontaneous and lively, and the tone of the band is extraordinarily good. The recording is well up to the standards of the best we get nowadays.

AUBERT
V-W1151
IMPORTED

HABANERA. Two sides. Société des Concerts du Conservatoire conducted by Piero Coppola. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

**ROGER-
DUCASSE**
V-W1140
IMPORTED

SARABANDE: *Poème Symphonique pour Orchestre et Voix*. Two sides. Symphony Orchestra conducted by Piero Coppola. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

SCHMITT
C-67924D
to
C-67927D

LA TRAGÉDIE DE SALOMÉ. Eight sides. Orchestre des Concerts Straram conducted by Florent Schmitt. Four 12-inch discs in album. Columbia Set No. 157. \$8.

Miniature Score: Durand et Cie.

Louis Aubert is one of the best known of Gabriel Fauré's pupils. Born at Paramé (Ill-et-Vilaine) in 1877, he received his first musical lessons from his father, himself a competent musician. Later he entered the Conservatoire, where his teachers were Dièmer (piano), Lavignac (harmony) and Fauré (composition). The *Habanera*, apparently the first important work of Aubert's to be recorded, was first performed at a Padeloup concert in 1916. A highly colored, skilfully written symphonic dance, it is pleasant and tuneful—and somewhat conventional, with traces, here and there, of the influence of Ravel and Debussy. Emile Vuillermoz has a very high opinion of this piece. He has written: "One must read the score of the *Habanera* to receive a lesson in taste, moderation, clarity and tact. Everything in it is so clear, so precise and so infallible that such a reading is infinitely instructive. I know composers of real talent who would gain great advantage from studying it closely in order to rid their instrumental technique of the false elegances and useless details which encumber it and render it heavy. The orchestral style is at once supple and solid. The sonority is rich, elastic and deep, with all the fluidity and finesse which our most delicate *pointellistes* seek. It is an accomplished model of its type."

Piero Coppola and his orchestra perform it gracefully, and the recording is beautifully balanced and clear.

Jean-Jules-Amable Roger-Ducasse, to whom, incidentally, Aubert dedicated the *Habanera*, is another pupil of Fauré's. He was born at Bordeaux in 1875, entering

the Paris Conservatoire in 1892, where he was taught by de Beriot (piano), Pessard (harmony), Gédalge (counterpoint and fugue) and Fauré (composition). Fauré evidently had great confidence in Roger-Ducasse, for from 1899 he permitted him to take charge of his class in his absence, and he selected him to make the piano-forte arrangements of his Requiem and the suite, *Pelléas et Mélisande*. The *Sarabande*, for orchestra and chorus (without text), was written in 1910. It is grave and reflective music, exhibiting a fine clarity and polish of style.

Coppola, who is nearly always at his best in French music, plays the work commendably, and the balance between the voices and orchestra is excellent. The orchestra dominates throughout the piece, and the occasional entrances of the voices are accomplished effectively. There is nothing to criticize in the recording.

Schmitt's recording of his own *Tragedy of Salomé* was reviewed on page 457 of the January, 1931, issue, when the imported pressings appeared.

MOZART
V-ES698
IMPORTED

MAURERISCHE TRAUERMUSIK. One side and
DIE ENTFUHRUNG AUS DEM SERAIL: *Overture*. One
side. Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech.
One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Miniature Scores: Eulenburg Nos. 830 and 663.

Mozart's connection with Freemasonry is well known. Several works resulted from this association, among them the *Magic Flute* and the *Masonic Funeral Music*. "It is the musical expression," Jahn said, "of that manly calm which gives sorrow its due, and no more than its due, in the presence of death. . . ." It is one of Mozart's most effective orchestral pieces, saying so much so well in such short space. Dr. Blech and the Berlin State Opera Orchestra perform it admirably, emphasizing the fine dignity and restraint of the music. . . . The *Overture to Il Seraglio* is played with immense energy, and the recording is singularly good. The concert ending to the *Overture*, made by Busoni, is given in this version.

HARSÁNYI
MIALOVICI
V-K6114
IMPORTED

FOX-TROT. (Tibor Harsányi) Orchestra (Wind instruments,
clavier and percussion) conducted by Tibor Harsányi. One side
and
CHINDIA: *Danse paysanne roumaine*. (Marcel Mialovici) One
side. Orchestra (Wind instruments and clavier) conducted by
Marcel Mialovici. One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

Though he is a young man, several of Tibor Harsányi's works have been recorded. His string quartet was reviewed on page 91 of the May, 1930, issue of *Disques*, and his Sonata for 'Cello and Piano and *Cinq Préludes brefs* for piano were reviewed in the November, 1930, issue. Notes on the composer can be found in those reviews. In his 'Cello Sonata Harsányi made use of jazz material in the final movement, and here he appears again with a clever little piece entitled *Fox-Trot*. It is an appealing and attractive work, effectively written. Marcel Mialovici's *Chindia*, on the reverse side, is, by comparison, dull. The recording is excellent in both numbers.

**FLOTOW**

C-G50296D

**MARTHA: Overture.** Two sides. Symphony Orchestra conducted by Frederick Weissmann. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 680.

This is rather below the usual level of Dr. Weissmann's records. The music itself no longer holds much of interest and the interpretation lacks poise and polish. The orchestral tone is somewhat coarse, and the recording is pinched and thin.



CONCERTO

**BACH
SCHUBERT**

B-90161

and

B-90162

**BRANDENBURG CONCERTO No. 3 in G Major.** (Bach)

Three sides and

ROSAMUNDE: Entr'acte No. 2. (Schubert) One side. Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler.

Two 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

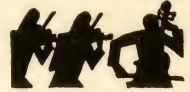
Miniature Scores: Eulenburg Nos. 254 and 817.

Furtwängler until now hasn't had much of an opportunity to gather unto himself the amount of phonographic fame to which his talents properly entitle him. In every case his records brought no new music to the record repertory; they were simply duplications, though highly interesting and welcome ones, of music pretty familiar to all of us. There were abundant indications in these records, though, that, given the right music and the right recording, Furtwängler would sooner or later achieve something quite out of the ordinary. Here he has the proper music and the proper recording, and the results, to complete the happy tale, far exceed all reasonable expectations.

Two of the six numbers that comprise the Brandenburg set of concertos have been made locally available: No. 2, played by Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, and No. 6 by Sir Henry J. Wood and a symphony orchestra. So eminent an authority as Parry considered No. 3 the most remarkable of the set. Scored for three groups of strings, violins, violas and 'cellos, the work is in two movements, each an allegro. Indescribably refreshing, the music is robust and joyous, revealing Bach in one of his most attractive and warmly human moods. Such freshness, order and sanity as Bach gives us here constitute one of the finest pleasures life on this grotesque planet has to offer.

As was hinted above, the performance is an exceptionally good one. Furtwängler's sensitive conception of the music has been realized by the orchestra with brilliant success. Even in these always surprising days, when good recording is the rule rather than, as not so long ago, the exception, such delicacy and such superb string tone are too seldom encountered. . . . The *Rosamunde* Entr'acte, used to fill out the odd side of the set, is felicitously played and recorded.

CHAMBER MUSIC



**MOZART
THUILLE**

V-W1143

to

V-W1145

IMPORTED

QUINTET IN E FLAT *for Piano and Wind Instruments*. (K. 452) (Mozart) Five sides and

GAVOTTE *for Piano and Quintet of Wind Instruments*. (Ludwig Thuille) One side. Société des Instruments à Vent de Paris. Three 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Miniature Score: (Mozart) Eulenburg No. 160.

BEETHOVEN

D-T10002

and

D-T10003

IMPORTED

SERENADE *for Violin, Flute and Viola*, Op. 25. Four sides. Marcel Darrieux (Violin), Marcel Moyse (Flute), and Pierre Pasquier (Viola). Two 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

The mild flood of not-too-well-known Mozart works, which began so auspiciously a month or so ago, is happily still flowing. The latest of his works to appear is this Quintet in E Flat, for piano, oboe, clarinet, horn and bassoon. This is not the first recording of the Quintet, however, for sometime ago the National Gramophonic Society, always seeking fresh and unfamiliar music to record, issued it in a version played by such well-known artists as Kathleen Long, Léon Goossens, Frederick Thurston, Aubrey Brain and J. Alexandra.

The Quintet was composed by Mozart in March, 1784, for a concert he gave in a theatre in Vienna, and it was received with gratifying enthusiasm. Mozart, highly elated at the manner in which it had been applauded, wrote to his father shortly after the concert: "I myself consider it the best thing I ever wrote in my life. I do wish you could have heard it! And how beautifully it was performed! To tell the truth, I grew tired of the mere playing towards the end, and it reflects no small credit on me that my audience did not in any degree share the fatigue."

In the Quintet Mozart's uncanny appreciation of the possibilities of the various instruments he employs is always evident. The main interest of the work lies in the manner in which he combines and contrasts his instruments and the charming effects he obtains. The thematic material is slight and little is done with it, but the novelty of the instrumental coloring is unfailingly interesting. The piano, more agile than the wind instruments, keeps the whole thing moving at a rapid pace and takes a leading part throughout. The wind instruments, adding their rich colors, keep the harmony of sound flexible and beautiful, and the whole work is a model of clarity, charm and good order.

The Société des Instruments à Vent de Paris is made up of obviously competent performers, and its interpretation is smoothly and impeccably recorded.

Ludwig Thuille (1861-1907) was a friend of Richard Strauss. The latter, while at Meiningen, produced a piano trio and a symphony by Thuille, which did much to establish the composer's reputation. The Gavotte recorded here evi-



dently comes from the Sextet for Piano and Wind Instruments, composed in 1887 and performed at the National German Music Union at Wiesbaden in 1889. So far as we know, the Gavotte is the first work of Thuille's to be recorded. It is skilfully written.

In making available works like this Serenade, Op. 25, of Beethoven, the phonograph is surely performing an inestimable service, for most of us have no other way to hear such music. There is, as everybody knows, a vast amount of interesting music that is unjustly condemned to oblivion simply because of the formidable difficulties that would attend performances of it. Now that most of the standard works have been recorded, it is to be hoped that the companies will turn to these works, both classic and modern, with increasing energy. Following that lead, the phonograph need not be a more or less satisfactory reflection of what goes on in the concert halls and opera houses; it can assume, and at once, a position of central importance in the musical life of the world.

The Serenade given here was published early in 1802. Later it was revised by Beethoven, and made into a Serenade for piano and flute or violin. This was issued, as Op. 41, in 1803. In this recording the Op. 25 version is given. Considered in relation to Beethoven's other works, the Serenade is of little consequence, but the unusual combination, together with the attractiveness of the writing, gives the piece a charm and interest that might otherwise be lacking. The three performers play it delightfully, and Moyse's flute, as usual, is incomparable. The Decca recording, sometimes insufficient in reproducing the larger instrumental combinations, is excellent in this work. Side 3, however, is marred by a strange hammering noticeable at intervals throughout the record. In the final groove of the disc it grows appreciably louder, as if a carpenter, discreetly at work in the hall while the recording was in progress, at the music's conclusion burst into enthusiastic activity. Such carelessness, spoiling for some an otherwise practically perfect record side, is not easy to condone.

**IPPOLITOW-
IVANOW**

C-GQX10045

IMPORTED

QUARTET IN A MINOR: *Humoresca*. Two sides. Poltronieri Quartet. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Save for several sections of his *Caucasian Sketches*, nothing of Ippolitow-Ivanow has been recorded. An amusing note on the composer appeared recently in the *New York Times*. "Ippolitow-Ivanow, the Russian composer, now 71 years old, lives in a house behind the Moscow Conservatory given him by the government. Still active in his art, he told a recent visitor that he was writing a new opera, 'which will have no relation to the Five-Year Plan.' Mr. Ippolitow-Ivanow complained that things in Russia were bad, that there was little food. But the meal that evening began at 7:30 P. M., concluded at 3 A. M., and embraced seventeen courses."

The Poltronieri Quartet plays beautifully, and its interpretation has been fittingly recorded. The disc forms a pleasant departure from the beaten paths—paths that are becoming a bit too well worn—and it shows Ippolitow-Ivanow in a somewhat better light than do the insipid *Caucasian Sketches*.

FRANCK

C-67928D

to

C-67931D

SONATA in A Major. Eight sides. Alfred Dubois (Violin) and Marcel Maas (Piano).

Four 12-inch discs in album. Columbia Set No. 158. \$6.



This popular Sonata, despite its frequent performance, somehow holds its own extraordinarily well, retaining to a surprising degree the profound appeal it commonly makes when one hears it for the first time or so. Written in 1886 and dedicated to the late Eugène Ysaye, the work is considered one of Franck's major compositions, and in it he makes use of the "cyclic" plan, utilizing the same themes in successive movements. Despite the mild restlessness of parts of the work, it is predominantly cool, serene and calm. But it is not the untroubled, superficial serenity of one who is serene simply because he has never been touched by serious pain. It is rather the lofty serenity of a man who, through superior mental and spiritual qualities, has succeeded in putting pain and suffering in their proper places—in a way, the fine serenity of a Havelock Ellis, which is not to be mistaken for complacency.

This recording is clearly a good one. Both artists are excellent performers, and their interpretation, effectively planned and carried out, is sensitive and well-considered. The violin tone is charming, and it is felicitously balanced with the piano. Both instruments are reproduced with impressive fidelity. If by any chance the Franck Sonata is still missing from your shelves, this one deserves your consideration.

SCHUBERT

V-8216

to

V-8218

SONATA in A Major, Op. 162. Six sides. Sergei Rachmaninoff (Piano) and Fritz Kreisler (Violin).

Three 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-107. \$7.50.

This recording belongs beside the album containing Schubert's Trio in B Flat Major, played by Casals, Thibaud and Cortot, and, unless there has been a sudden turn for the worse in popular taste, it should enjoy the same well-deserved esteem that that magnificent album enjoyed. Played with similar grace and feeling, the music has the same indescribable charm and freshness of melody, the same exhilarating bounce, the same high eloquence and the same gusto that help make the Trio the masterpiece that it indubitably is. The combination of Schubert, Kreisler, Rachmaninoff and superlative recording, moreover, is an impressive one, not likely to be often encountered in this world. Confronted with such surpassing richness, one even forgets to curse the stiff price that accompanies the red labels.

Like most of Schubert, the Sonata contains music that nearly everyone can enjoy, and yet there are no compromises, no concessions to tastes that respond only to the maudlin, the cheap, the meretricious. To squeeze such a tremendous stream of pure melody into comparatively small space, and further to invest it with such laudable restraint and dignity—this is a feat which only Schubert could perform with genuine success. In the Andantino emerges a tune that must have been cavorting through Moszkowski's head when he wrote his ubiquitous *Serenade*. . . . All in all, a notable set of records: perhaps, in fact, the most thoroughly enjoyable that the team of Kreisler and Rachmaninoff has thus far given us.



PIANO

SCHUMANN

B-90169

and

B-90170

SCENES OF CHILDHOOD, Op. 15. (1) *From Foreign Lands and Peoples*. (2) *Curious Story*. (3) *Blind-Man's Buff*. (4) *Entreating Child*. (5) *Happiness Enough*. (6) *Important Event*. (7) *Dreaming*. (8) *By the Fireside*. (9) *Knight of the Hobby-Horse*. (10) *Almost Too Serious*. (11) *Frightening*. (12) *Falling Asleep*. (13) *The Poet Speaks*. Four sides. Johnny Aubert (Piano). Two 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

With excellent recordings available of his *Carnaval*, *Die Davidsbündlertänze*, *Etudes Symphoniques* and *Kinderscenen*, Schumann's piano music is fairly well represented on the phonograph. *Kinderscenen* has heretofore been obtainable only in the two imported records played by Fanny Davies, so that these two Brunswick records, repressed from a recent Polydor release, constitute an altogether welcome and valuable issue.

As was the case with so many of Schumann's piano compositions, the thirteen pieces comprising *Kinderscenen*, which belong to the composer's early period—the period, incidentally, which produced, among other things, *Carnaval*, *Kreisleriana*, *Novelletten*, *Fantasiestücke*, *Bunte Blätter*, *Albumblätter* and *Die Davidsbündlertänze*,—probably had their origin in personal experience. Glancing back at childhood, Schumann found it on the whole pleasant, and this feeling he communicates vividly in these pieces. But he also realized that the sadnesses of childhood are, contrary to the complacent belief of so many thick-skulled adults, very real and disturbing ones, and so melancholy and pain are properly not absent from this music.

Johnny Aubert, as the labels are careful to inform us, is a noted Swiss pianist living in Geneva, who some years ago toured the United States. His performance here is admirable, giving us these well-contrasted pieces with a felicitous blending of grace, poetry, warmth of feeling, humor and technical skill. The well-balanced recording is up to the standard of Polydor piano reproduction, which is sufficient praise.

SAINT-SAËNS

V-K6113

IMPORTED

WEDDING CAKE: *Caprice Valse*. Two sides. Denise Herbrecht and Lucien Petitjean (Two Pianos). One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

The caprice valse, *Wedding Cake*, is Op. 76 in Saint-Saëns' lengthy list of works. Originally written for pianoforte and strings, it is here presented in a four hand arrangement. A lively little piece, it is skilfully played by Denise Herbrecht and Lucien Petitjean, who were the pianists in the recent recording of Saint-Saëns' Third Symphony.

TANSMAN
V-K6036
IMPORTED

{ MAZURKAS Nos. 1, 4, 6, 8 and 10. Two sides. Alexander Tansman (Piano). One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.



DELIUS
C-2460D

{ FIVE PIANO PIECES: *Waltz, Toccata, Mazurka and Waltz*. Two sides. Evelyn Howard-Jones (Piano). One 10-inch disc. 75c.

CHOPIN
V-7391

{ POLONAISE in E Flat Minor, Op. 26, No. 2. Two sides. Ignace Jan Paderewski (Piano). One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Alexander Tansman, born June 12, 1897, at Lodz, Poland, received his early musical training in his native town, and from there he proceeded to Warsaw, where, in addition to studying law at the University of Warsaw, he continued his musical education with Pierre Rytel. Beginning to compose at the age of nine, he had a symphonic serenade for strings played in public by the time he was fifteen. He now lives in Paris. In 1927-28-29 Tansman toured America, playing his second concerto for piano and taking part in chamber music concerts. The five Mazurkas given here, from Ten Mazurkas (1918-28), are effective, and the fact that the composer himself plays them lends added interest to the disc, which is fairly well-recorded.

The four Delius miniatures, taken from his Five Piano Pieces, are slight but charming, and Evelyn Howard-Jones, who last January appeared on the Columbia list playing the same composer's Three Preludes and Dance for Harpsichord, renders them sympathetically. The recording, save for several doubtful spots, is good.

Recorded well-nigh perfectly and played with Paderewski's customary charm and power, the Chopin disc should enjoy wide popularity, for it not only presents Chopin interpreted incomparably but it in addition offers a faithful reproduction of Paderewski's keyboard skill. Victor piano recording, as has been noted before in these columns, has improved wonderfully of late, and now it is unsurpassed by any with which we are familiar. The Polonaise in E Flat Minor, known sometimes as the *Siberian* or *Revolt* Polonaise, was published in 1836. It was to Huneker "an awe-provoking work," breathing "defiance and rancor from the start" and ending "in gloom and the impotent clanking of chains."

LISZT
C-50291D

{ HUNGARIAN RHAPSODY No. 12. Two sides. Irene Scharrer (Piano). One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

Brilliantly recorded and played, there is yet something not altogether satisfactory about this disc. Most hearers will not have much difficulty in locating the trouble. It seems a pity, with so much piano music left untouched, that artists of the type of Irene Scharrer should continue issuing such pieces as this. But she does her best, and that best is uncommonly good.

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RELEASES FOR THE MONTH OF JULY

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(Am Stillen Herd)
PREISLIED (Prize Song)
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(Leading Tenor Vienna State Opera) | Recorded in Europe
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OPERA



**ROSSINI
MOZART**

C-67932D

to

C-67947D

IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA: *Comic Opera in Two Acts.*
(Rossini) Italian Operatic Artists, La Scala Chorus and Milan
Symphony Orchestra conducted by Lorenzo Molajoli. Thirty-
one sides and

LE NOZZE DI FIGARO: *Overture.* (Mozart) One side.
Milan Symphony Orchestra conducted by Lorenzo Molajoli.
Sixteen 12-inch discs in two albums. Columbia Operatic Set
No. 8. \$24.

THE CAST

Figaro.....	Riccardo Stracciari
Rosina.....	Mercedes Capsir
The Count of Almaviva.....	Dino Borgioli
Don Basilio.....	Vincenzo Bettoni
Doctor Bartolo.....	Salvatore Baccaloni
Bertha.....	Cestra Ferrari
Fiorello.....	Attilio Bordonali
An Official.....	Aristide Baracchi

Not many characters of so humble a station in life as the barber Figaro, the resourceful factotum of Seville, have been so fortunate as to be immortalized in at least two apparently deathless operas: Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, based on the second of a trilogy of Figaro comedies by Beaumarchais, and Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, likewise based on a Beaumarchais comedy. And there are still other versions, of less fame and less enduring quality, on record—not, however, of the phonographic species.

This joyous opera of Rossini's, full of engaging melodies, high spirits, brilliant climaxes and amusing incidents, is well adapted for recording purposes, and offers a welcome contrast to the rather lengthy list of recorded Italian operas, all of which have been extremely gloomy and tragic in character. Said to have been written in considerably less than a month—in thirteen days, in fact,—the score shows no signs of hurry; the music, brilliantly contrived to display the human voice, seems always to be in just the proper style to fit the stage action. As the day approached for the first performance of Rossini's work, it was feared that Paisiello, whose work dealing with the same subject had aroused Mozart's admiration, might be angered at Rossini's audacity in giving a new setting to Beaumarchais' comedy. To avoid possible trouble, Rossini wrote to Paisiello, asking permission to use the subject. "Beaumarchais's comedy," he said, "is presented in Rome in the form of a comic drama under the title of *Almaviva, ossia l'inutile Precauzione* [the original title of Rossini's work] in order that the public may be fully convinced of the sentiments of respect and veneration by which the author of the music of this drama is animated with regard to the celebrated Paisiello, who has already treated the subject under its primitive title. Himself invited to undertake

COLUMBIA MASTERWORKS*

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This Columbia Masterworks Set constitutes the first issue in America of any of the longer compositions by the great French contemporary composer Florent Schmitt, world-known as one of the most gifted and energetic of the modernists. His work is forceful, direct and highly descriptive, partaking both of the romanticism of the German school and the most advanced idiom of current musical thought. This is the most celebrated of his orchestral works—a vivid and dramatic musical delineation of the immortal story of Salome, Herod and John the Baptist.

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Florent Schmitt: La Tragédie de Salomé. By Florent Schmitt and Orchestre des Concerts Straram. In Eight Parts, on Four 12-inch Records. \$8.00 with album.

CÉSAR FRANCK: SONATA IN A MAJOR FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO.

The recent death of Eugen Ysaye brings prominently to the world's consciousness the fact that it was for this great virtuoso that César Franck wrote his unique violin sonata. Ysaye is dead, but the sonata, it is safe to say, is immortal. As Grove's Dictionary aptly intimates, it is full of dreamy ecstasy, alternating with passages of passionate vehemence, nobility and gaiety. The term "Cathedrals in sound" applied by an eminent writer years ago to the major compositions of Franck is peculiarly happy in its description of this noble work. An excellent electrical recording of the sonata is now supplied in this outstandingly meritorious issue by two eminent Belgian artists, both laureates of the Brussels Conservatory.



Columbia Masterworks Set No. 158

César Franck: Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano. By Alfred Dubois and Marcel Maas. In Eight Parts, on Four 12-inch Records. \$6.00 with album.

Columbia Operatic Series No. 8

IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA (Rossini). The eighth in the distinguished series of Columbia's complete operas is Rossini's sparkling Barber of Seville, a work which has withstood the assaults of time for long over a hundred years and is as fresh, enjoyable and well liked today as it was in its first season. The opera was written for the Roman Carnival in 1815, and was completed in the extraordinary space of thirteen days. No more happy characterization has ever been made than that of the music of the Barber as "musical champagne". Special features of this release are the characterizations of Riccardo Stracciari and Dino Borgioli.

Rossini: Il Barbiere di Siviglia. By Eminent Operatic Artists of Italy. With Chorus of La Scala and Milan Symphony Orchestra. Conducted by Cav. Lorenzo Molajoli. In 31 parts—two albums, \$24.00 complete.



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this difficult task, the maestro Gioachino Rossini, in order to avoid the reproach of entering rashly into rivalry with the immortal author who preceded him, expressly required that the *Barber of Seville* should be entirely versified anew and also that new situations should be added for the musical pieces which, moreover, are required by the modern theatrical taste, entirely changed since the time when the renowned Paisiello wrote his work."



Paisiello, although he gave his consent to the use of the subject, believed that the opera would certainly fail, and in fact did all in his power to prevent the first performance from being successful. He succeeded admirably; the première, at the Argentina Theatre, Rome, February 5, 1816, was a complete failure. But ensuing performances won the public's approval, and since then the opera has enjoyed the success it properly deserves.

The performance here is in all respects excellent. The cast, comprising several well-known names, is a competent one, and enters into the work with the gusto and liveliness demanded by the libretto. The singing, too, is extraordinarily good. The Milan Symphony, under Molajoli, and the chorus of La Scala, under Veneziani, so often the features of Columbia's operatic albums, again distinguish themselves, giving a smooth, vigorous performance. The recording is finely done.

The opera, though generally given in two acts, is here divided into three, the second beginning with the cavatina *Una voce poco fa*.

The overture to Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, dealing with the same subject, makes an appropriate piece with which to fill out the odd side of the set, and it is capably played by the Milan Symphony.

VERDI
V-7393

{ OTELLO: Act 4—(a) *Salce, salce*; (b) *Ave Maria*. Two sides.
Elisabeth Rethberg (Soprano) with orchestra.
One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Desdemona's plaintive music regarding her childhood, which she sings to her maid, Emilia, at the beginning of Act 4, is movingly rendered here by Elisabeth Rethberg, assisted by a good orchestra and flawless recording. The quiet *Ave Maria* is likewise well-sung and recorded.

WAGNER
B-90171

{ DIE MEISTERSINGER: (a) *Am Stillen Herd*; (b) *Preislied*.
Two sides. Alfred Piccaver (Tenor) with orchestra conducted
by Julius Prüwer. One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

There are some things, in themselves pleasant, that are somehow constantly stirring up painful memories and thoughts. Well-sung and recorded excerpts from *Die Meistersinger* do this. Whenever one is issued, one's pleasure in the performance is appreciably diminished by the reminder that, though most of the Italian operas and a good many of Wagner's, including even *Tannhäuser*, have been recorded, *Die Meistersinger*, save for the various excerpts, still remains untouched. At any rate, a thoroughly satisfactory recording of the *Preislied* has been missing from the catalogues, and this one by Piccaver, leading tenor of the Vienna State Opera, fills the gap in a creditable manner. Moreover, Julius Prüwer directs

Victor Records

MUSICAL MASTERPIECE SERIES

Sonata in A Major for Piano and Violin, Opus 162, by Schubert. Played by Sergei Rachmaninoff and Fritz Kreisler on three double-faced Victor Records in Album M-107 (Nos. 8216-8218). In automatic sequence Album AM-107 (Nos. 8219-8221). List price, \$7.50.

Taking for granted that this Sonata, being the work of Franz Schubert, necessarily abounds in lovely melody, this recording of it will be particularly interesting to own because it offers a combination of artists seldom available on the concert stage. When two men like Rachmaninoff and Kreisler combine forces they bring a magnificence to the charming simplicity of the music which only the really great can give. There is something direct and winsome about this Sonata that will appeal to everyone.

Rustic Wedding Symphony by Carl Goldmark. Played by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Robert Heger, on five double-faced Victor Records in Album M-103 (Nos. 9927-9931). In automatic sequence Album AM-103 (Nos. 9932-9936). List price, \$7.50.

Written in symphonic form, this music is, in reality, a suite which follows the program implied by the titles of the different movements. There are five in various moods . . . utterly charming . . . and exceptionally tuneful.

RED SEAL RECORDS

Yours is My Heart Alone and
Two Hearts. Sung by Richard Crooks with orchestral accompaniment on Victor Record 1509. List price, \$1.50.

Thäis—Meditation (Massenet) and
Le Coq d'Or—Hymn to the Sun (Rimsky-Korsakow). Played by Mischa Elman with piano accompaniment on Victor Record 7392. List price, \$2.00.

Polonaise in E Flat Minor (Chopin).
Played by Ignace Jan Paderewski on Victor Record 7391. List price, \$2.00.

Otello—Salce, salce (Willow Song) and
Otello—Ave Maria (Verdi). Sung with orchestral accompaniment by Elisabeth Rethberg on Victor Record 7393. List price, \$2.00.



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the orchestral accompaniment, and as would be expected it adds considerably to the value of the disc. *Im Stillen Herd*, on the reverse side, is well-sung, too, and the orchestra again gives an admirable performance. The recording in both selections is clear and nicely-balanced.



**BIZET
DONIZETTI**
C-50290D

- I PESCATORI DI PERLE: *Mi par d'udir ancora*. (Bizet)
One side and
LA FAVORITA: *Spirto gentil*. (Donizetti) One side. Tommaso
Alcaide (Tenor) with orchestra. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

In his first locally issued Columbia record, reviewed here last month, Tommaso Alcaide made a decidedly favorable impression. One was conscious of a finely endowed tenor voice, of unusually rich quality, always under judicious control. Here, in two not very rewarding pieces, he confirms that first impression. The disc is well turned out.

WAGNER
C-50294D

- PARSIFAL: Act 3—*Une arme seule et sûre*. One side and
LOHENGRIN: Act 3—*Duet*. Georges Thill (Tenor) and
Marise Beaujon (Soprano) with orchestra.
One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

The *Parsifal* number, unrecorded elsewhere save in the Muck version of the complete third act, is beautifully sung by Thill, who scored such a success with the Metropolitan this past season. The orchestral accompaniment, too, is first-rate, and the whole thing is topped off with fine recording. The *Lohengrin* selection, in which Thill is assisted by a good soprano, is well-done.

CHORAL



BACH
V-B3707
IMPORTED

- GOD LIVETH STILL. One side and
UP, UP, MY SOUL, WITH GLADNESS. One side. King's
College Chapel Choir, Cambridge, conducted by A. H. Mann.
One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

This is an excellent and very beautiful little record. Singing two Bach chorales, the King's College Chapel Choir reveals splendid balance and musicianship, and its work has been recorded effectively. The late Dr. A. H. Mann conducts the choir, which sings without accompaniment.

**FABER
KEBLE**
V-22692

- HARK! HARK, MY SOUL! (Frederick W. Faber-Henry
Smart) One side and
SUN OF MY SOUL. (John Keble-P. Ritter) One side. St.
Bartholomew's Choir with organ accompaniment by David
McK. Williams. One 10-inch disc. 75c.

Recorded with almost unbelievable accuracy in St. Bartholomew's Church, New York, this disc should have a wide sale. The famous St. Bartholomew's Choir, one of the most proficient and best-drilled in America, sings the two well-known hymns with conviction and skill, and the recording is so realistic as to make this, mechanically, one of the best choral records available.

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**RIMSKY-KORSAKOW
MASSENET**

V-7392

LE COQ D'OR: *Hymn to the Sun.* (Rimsky-Korsakow-Franko)
One side and
THAIS: *Meditation.* (Massenet) One side. Mischa Elman (Violin) with piano accompaniment by Josef Bonime.
One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Elman's fiddling is glowing and well-poised in these two familiar numbers. But save for the fine recording, the disc doesn't get far beyond the general level of violin records. What that general level is doesn't require much difficulty to find out.

HUBAY

C-50297D

CONCERTO in G Minor: *Adagio and Scherzo.* Two sides.
Efrem Zimbalist (Violin) with piano accompaniment.
One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

The music in these two movements from Hubay's Violin Concerto in G Minor is not very rewarding, but Zimbalist, always a competent violinist, fiddles beautifully, and the recording is impressively full. The Scherzo is the more enjoyable movement.

VOCAL



**MENDELSSOHN
BACH**

V-7388

ST. PAUL: *But the Lord Is Mindful of His Own.* (Mendelssohn) One side and
FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD: *My Heart Ever Faithful.* (Bach) One side. Ernestine Schumann-Heink (Contralto) with orchestra. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

These two selections, one from a Mendelssohn oratorio and the other from a Bach cantata, give the soloist ample opportunity to display her vocal ability, unhappily fading somewhat. Nonetheless, she sings very well here, and the orchestral accompaniment is excellent in both numbers, as is the recording.

**STOLZ
LEHÁR**

V-1509

TWO HEARTS. (Reisch-Robinson-Young-Stolz) One side and
YOURS IS MY HEART ALONE. (Herzer-Löhner-Smith-Lehár) One side. Richard Crooks (Tenor) with orchestra.
One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

Two Hearts is the waltz from the highly praised German picture *Zwei Herzen im ¾ Takt*. It is an engaging waltz, but hardly so good as one would gather from the movie critics' glowing reviews, which suggested that their authors hadn't heard a good waltz for years. Here, to an effective orchestral accompaniment, it is attractively sung by Richard Crooks. *Yours Is My Heart Alone* is from Franz Lehár's new operetta, *Das Land des Lächelns*. It is well-sung.

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CORRESPONDENCE



Neglected Compositions

Editor, *Disques*:

With greatest interest do I wait every month for the publication of new records in *Disques*, and every month I find the same repetition of already recorded works. Why? Is it not in the interest of the recording companies to issue new works? Methinks it would greatly stimulate sales of records. I particularly am partial to orchestra and opera and with anxiety I look for instance for the unrecorded symphonic poems of Richard Strauss: *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, *Don Quixote*, *From Italy*, also his *Domestic* and *Alpine* Symphonies. But alas, it is in vain! Would a word from you encourage recording companies to record these wonderful works of the greatest living composer? I am sure your good services would be really appreciated by all real lovers of music.

HANS SCHROEDER

Knoxville, Tenn.

Breaks Between Record Sides

Editor, *Disques*:

I am very much pleased with *Disques*, especially the manner in which you praise a good number or criticize a piece of bad recording or interpretation. Critical reviews of this kind should have the good effect of keeping the companies from releasing any but those records which are good and reasonably free from flaws. My greatest criticism to some of the recordings of complete musical works, especially chamber music, is in the way the "breaks" are made between the different sides of the records. It should be borne in mind that just getting all the music on the disc is not the sole aim sought after. The companies should aim at making each record a well balanced and artistic piece of work in itself, if possible. This can best be done by making the "breaks" at the end of a movement rather than by chopping off the final portion and carrying it over to the next side as is often done, even when there is plenty of room to complete it on the first side. As the two movements are usually different in style this cutting in the wrong place spoils the musical balance of both sides and is very irritating, especially when not necessary. Some companies have the bad habit also of using eight or ten sides to record a selection

that could have been put on three or four sides less.

FRANK A. TAYLOR

Chicago, Ill.

Italian Operas

Editor, *Disques*:

Mr. Voigtsberger, in his letter, enthusiastically expresses his appreciation of Wagner. This is well and good, but why should he deem it necessary to speak so contemptuously of the works of Verdi and other great composers?

Surely there is room in the musical world for different kinds of operas, each great in its class. We may have our preferences, of course. But I see no reason why a person who prefers Wagner should deny that there may be some merit in operas whose style of music differs from his.

Mr. Voigtsberger makes contemptuous mention of three operas, *Rigoletto*, *Lucia*, and *The Barber of Seville*. The composers of these, Verdi, Donizetti and Rossini, are a triumvirate of Italians, whose melodious works have stood the test of time. They have been rendered by many of the world's greatest singers, and some of these never appeared in any of Wagner's operas, so far as I am aware. For instance: Patti, Melba, Caruso, Gigli, Rosa Ponselle. Surely the achievements of these artists in the operas of Verdi, Donizetti and Rossini are important. Indeed, how could these singers have made such conspicuous successes without the scores of these composers?

BRAINERD MCKEE

New York, N. Y.

Lilli Lehmann Discs

Editor, *Disques*:

I understand that the acoustical discs made by the late Mme. Lilli Lehmann are still available in England from the Parlophone Co., who will press these records again if an order for twenty-five can be placed at one time. The demands for these records are scattered in America, but I am sure there are music lovers enough to get "ourselves" together and obtain a shipment of these really historic discs.

ARTHUR C. WATSON

Ellenburg Depot, N. Y.

BOOKS

THE BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: 1881-1931. By M. A. DeWolfe Howe. Revised and extended in collaboration with John N. Burke. New York: *Houghton Mifflin Company*. \$2.50.

The services to music in America—music in all conceivable phases—of the Boston Symphony Orchestra can scarcely be estimated. One of the finest and most laudable institutions in a country jammed with institutions—not all of them, alas, altogether admirable either in purpose or in effect,—this product of a dream and ambition of Henry Lee Higginson, founder of the orchestra and for many years its chief means of support, celebrated its semicentennial the past season in a manner entirely in keeping with the lofty aim to which it has unfailingly adhered since the very beginning. Anniversaries, as we are all dismally aware, are commonly the excuse for gaudy banquets and eloquent speeches resounding with thundering platitudes. Maybe some of this went on in Boston last season, but if it did the outside world heard little of it. But it did hear of a fine Bach Festival and of many new modern works, specially commissioned by Dr. Koussevitzky for the occasion, by Strawinsky, Honegger, Roussel and others.

Beginning modestly but with definite aims in view, the orchestra gradually and by painful degrees increased in size and importance until, during the Muck régime, it was considered by connoisseurs to be one of the finest, if not actually the finest, symphonic organizations in the world. There are even today those who speak of that fabulous régime in a manner that suggests that the present American orchestras are mediocre compared to Dr. Muck's band. The unhappy episode which closed Dr. Muck's term of office is by now fairly well known, so that additional indignant comment is scarcely necessary. That episode, occurring in a large and presumably civilized country in the twentieth century, involves so many vital questions that reading even so brief and cautious an account of it as is given in Mr. Howe's book should cause those optimists glowing with a sense of ease and security at least a moment's uncomfortable reflection.

Today, looking back into the past, we frequently find abundant cause for profound regret that electrical recording as we now know

it had not been developed years ago. It is, for example, a thousand pities that we haven't electrical records of the Boston Symphony Orchestra during its various stages of development; we should have records of the band when it was conducted by George Henschel, Wilhelm Gericke, Arthur Nikisch, Emil Paur, Dr. Muck, Max Fiedler, Rabaud and Monteux. Many of these records, of course, would be pretty poor, but all of them would be interesting, and some, if the accounts of those who heard the orchestra under Dr. Muck can be believed, would be extraordinarily fine. Indeed, the two acoustical records made by Dr. Muck, though hardly very impressive today from a mechanical point of view, at least suggest a splendidly drilled and proficient orchestra.

Future generations will have less cause for regret on that score, for some magnificent records of the orchestra under Koussevitzky have been made. Hearing these, music lovers of the next century will have no difficulty in corroborating the praises heaped upon the Russian conductor whose talents have restored the orchestra to a state of eminence similar to that it enjoyed under Muck. When the time comes for the Centennial Edition of Mr. Howe's book to be published, these records should prove of considerable value.

The volume is more a history than a critical study, as Mr. Howe himself freely acknowledges; he has been more interested in reporting the activities of the orchestra than in estimating the artistic value of those activities. He tells the story competently and frankly, and the book can be read with pleasure by anyone who is interested in the great symphony orchestras, for none has had a more glamorous history than the Boston organization. Mr. Howe's book was first published seventeen years ago. Now brought up to date so that the activities of the past season are included, the new edition contains chapters dealing with the final season of Dr. Muck and the subsequent history of the orchestra. New appendices, including a complete list of the music played during the fifty years, with dates of the performances, names of the soloists and the personnel since the first season, and the address on Higginson made by Bliss Perry last March, are useful features. These and a good index make the volume a valuable reference work.

